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PETER PIPER'S
TROUBLES

FARCICAL COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

JOS. H. SLATER

DICK & FITZGERALD

PUBLISHERS

18 Ann Street, New York

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PETER PIPER'S TROUBLES

A Farcial Comedy in Four Acts

BY
JOS. H. SLATER

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PETER PIPER'S TROUBLES

CHARACTERS

PETER PIPER.....*A lawyer's clerk and victim of circumstances*
SELWYN KILBY.....*A poor artist with great expectations*
JONAH BUNDY.....*A regular JONAH with deep designs*
DANIEL GRUBBINS.....*Looking out for No. 1*
HON. ADOLPHUS GUDGEON.....*Quite English, you know*
DORIS CHESTER.....*A music teacher*
WINIFRED BARRINGTON..*A dashing widow in search of a husband*
BETSY BOLIVAR.....*An American girl*

TIME.—*The present.* LOCALITY.—*New York City.*

TIME OF PLAYING.—*A full evening.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT I. Living-room in the artist's home. The course of true love never does run smooth. A designing widow. PIPER's troubles commence.

ACT II. Same as ACT I. A few days later. Pride and poverty. PIPER's noble sacrifice. "Allow me to introduce my wife." More trouble for PIPER.

ACT III. GRUBBIN's law office. A pair of rogues. A scheme to win a fortune. Set a thief to catch a thief. PIPER takes a hand in the game. "Fool, you have proposed to the wrong woman."

ACT IV. Same as ACT III. "The best laid plans of men." The valuable picture. "When rogues fall out." PIPER is nobody's fool. PETER PIPER organizes a new law firm with a life partner.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

PETER PIPER. A smooth-faced young fellow about 21. Wears

gray trousers, rather worn; white vest, black bow tie, turned down collar, light gray coat, soft hat.

SELWYN KILBY. Young man about 25. Wears business suit of dark color, fedora hat, turned down collar with black string tie.

DANIEL GRUBBINS. A man about 55, iron gray hair, short side whiskers. Wears long Prince Albert coat, light colored vest, gray trousers, black bow tie and high collar. In Acts III and IV he wears a dark business suit.

JONAH BUNDY. A bald-headed man about 50, smooth face. Wears suits similar to Mr. Grubbins, only turned down collar with black string tie.

ADOLPHUS GUDGEON. Young Englishman. He should be dressed elegantly, light gray suit, patent leather shoes; carries a small cane.

DORIS CHESTER. Young girl about 21, dark complexion. Wears light gray street costume, neat but not gaudy.

WINIFRED BARRINGTON. An elderly widow. Wears light, gorgeous summer dresses and is dressed elegantly, in contrast to Doris.

BETSY BOLIVAR. A young girl about 18. Wears a dress usually worn by a servant, white apron with pocket; letter in pocket. Act IV street costume.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES

Dress coat torn up the back, matches, cigarettes for PIPER. Picture wrapped in paper, large paste-board box containing clock, a smoking-jacket and cap, ladies handkerchief and note in pocket of smoking-jacket, also bills for SELWYN KILBY. Letter and a pack of cards for BETSY. Memorandum book, legal documents, pistol for JONAH BUNDY. Legal Documents, lighted lamp, knife or dagger for DANIEL GRUBBINS. Coin for ADOLPHUS. Glass of water, watch, pocket-book with bills, handkerchief, and gloves for MRS. BARRINGTON. Bell off stage.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

As seen by a performer on the stage facing the audience, R. means right hand, L., left hand. C., center of stage; C. D., door at center; D. R., door at right, D. L., door at left; L. I. E., left first entrance. UP means toward back of stage; DOWN, toward footlights.

PETER PIPER'S TROUBLES

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Living-room in the artist's home. Afternoon. Doors C., R., L., and L. I E. Table R., newspaper and hand glass on table. Chairs R. and L. of table. Arm chair DOWN R. Sofa DOWN L. between D. L. and L. I E. Small stand UP L., mirror on wall over stand. Picture on easel UP C. DISCOVERED BETSY BOLIVAR at table, admiring herself in hand glass.*

BETSY BOLIVAR. Oh, dear me, I sometimes wish I had been born a man instead of a woman. We poor girls do have such a hard time curling, frizzing and primping up, and then such fussing and fixing of our clothes, hooking and unhooking, lacing and buttoning up. Now on the other hand, look at the men; all they have to do is to throw their clothes on any old way and they're all toggled out. As far as clothes go, men have the softest snap in this world, whatever they may have in the next. (*Rises, crosses to sofa*) Miss Doris Chester promised to call and pay a short visit on her way to give her music lessons. She pretends she's calling on me, but I'm dead on to her little game. It takes one woman in love to understand another woman in love. (*Door bell rings off stage*) I bet that's her now. (*Goes toward c. d., singing*) "When you hear dem bells go ting-a-ling-a-ling, All join hands and sweetly we will sing." (*EXIT c. d. RE-ENTER immediately showing on DORIS CHESTER*) Do you know, Miss Doris, I thought when you didn't come before this that you were lost, strayed or stolen.

DORIS CHESTER (*laughing*). Stolen, Betsy? Oh, no fear of that. Who on earth would steal me?

BETSY. I know a certain young gentleman not over a hundred miles away would steal you, and I'll bet you wouldn't have him arrested for theft either. (*Crosses, sits L. of table*).

DORIS (*sits on sofa L.*). Well, Betsy, I told you I would call and you see I have kept my promise.

BETSY. Yes, and if you hadn't kept it I would sue you for breach of promise or some kind of breeches.

DORIS (*laughing*). And you'd win your case, for I wouldn't contest it. I never want to have anything to do with law or lawyers, if I can help it. But to change the subject, my visit here must be short this time as I have an appointment with one of my pupils. Has Mr. Kilby come home yet?

BETSY. No, Miss, he ain't come home yet. He has a mighty hard time to make ends meet, I can tell you. It's nothing but hustle, hustle all the time from sun-up till sun-down to get a bare living. It's awful how some' poor folks have to struggle. This hand to mouth existence from day to day, year in and year out, makes me weary. What with trying to keep the wolf and that other ferocious animal, the landlord, from the door, and framing up funny stories to stand him off till the sweet bye and bye. (PETER PIPER *heard singing in a deep voice, off stage*)

DORIS (*rises*). Good gracious, what's that?

BETSY. It sounds like the wolf at the door, Miss, but it isn't. (*Goes UP C., looks off C. D.*) It's a sheep on two legs calling himself Peter Piper. (*Goes DOWN C.*)

DORIS. That's a nice way to speak of your intended husband, I must say.

BETSY (*crosses R. of table*). Oh, well, it is no harm when I don't mean it.

ENTER PETER PIPER, C. D., *carrying torn dress coat*.

PETER. I beg pardon, ladies, I hope my vocal efforts were not displeasing.

BETSY. Excuse me for asking the question, but were you singing?

PETER. I thought I was.

BETSY. Well, it was my mistake. I thought it was a street peddler calling for rags or bottles.

PETER (*putting coat on chair*). But now to business. Where is Mr. Selwyn Kilby, Miss Betsy Bolivar?

BETSY. Not knowing, can't say, Mr. Peter Piper, but I'm expecting him home at any moment. (*Crosses to L.*) Miss Doris, come with me and I'll show you Mr. Kilby's latest picture. He calls it "Too proud to beg."

DORIS (*goes toward D. L.*). Oh, yes, I have a woman's curiosity to see that picture. You will excuse us, Mr. Piper?

PETER. Oh, certainly. I don't mind it at all. I'm used to getting left. (*Bows, crosses to L.* EXIT BETSY and DORIS D. L.) Yes, I'm used to getting left, ever since I was a baby. I was only two weeks old when I was left on a neighboring door-step and I have been left many a time since. I shall always find ways and means to amuse myself. I'll take a look at Kilby's picture (*Crosses UP stage*) and thus combine amusement with instruction. A devilish pretty girl that Doris Chester. I can't blame Kilby for being stuck on her, I almost feel a softening of the heart myself. (*Remains UP at picture*)

ENTER SELWYN KILBY C. D., *carrying picture wrapped in paper.*
Crosses L. to sofa, placing picture near sofa.

SELWYN KILBY (*sitting on sofa*). Confound the luck! Will it ever change? Again rejected and six months' time and labor thrown away. If I had been born a common mechanic I would have earned my bread and butter at least. Far better be a day laborer than a miserable half-starved artist, wearing out one's life for that empty bubble called fame. How can I ever tell Doris that my favorite picture has been rejected.

PETER (*goes DOWN stage*). What's that you say, Selwyn, rejected?

SELWYN. Oh, Peter, how are you? Yes, the picture which I considered my masterpiece and a prize winner called "Ariadne Weeping by the Seashore" has been rejected by a committee of blockheads, dolts, idiots.

PETER. I can sympathize with you. (*Shakes hands*) Behold another companion in misery.

SELWYN. You too, Peter?

PETER (*sits R. of table*). The same identical individual. You may remember my telling you once that I didn't like my position with that old money-grubbing rascal Daniel Grubbins, the shyster lawyer. I have found him to be a first class all-around, triple-plated old scoundrel, and that I had dirty work to do for him other than sweeping out the office. But, as you know, beggars can't be choosers, and poverty must often chew a hard crust; so I had to eat humble pie till something better turned up. At last, a generous friend who had influence with the powers that be, tried to procure me a fat political job working for Uncle Sam.

SELWYN. Good, in what capacity?

PETER. Literary. Reading the newspapers for five hours a day. But unfortunately for me I had to pass a sort of a civil service examination to get the job, and it was to make a

respectable appearance that I took the liberty of borrowing your best coat yesterday.

SELWYN. Oh, never mind the coat. You are welcome to that. But tell me, how did you pass?

PETER. Right out through the gate after the examination, a sadder, but a wiser man; like your picture I was rejected and dejected. The first question the old examiner asked me was "Where was Orion." I told him I didn't have the pleasure of knowing the gentleman personally, but from his Celtic name I imagined he lived somewhere in Ireland.

SELWYN. Why, Peter, Orion is one of the heavenly constellations.

PETER. That may be so, but it's no earthly consolation for me to know it now. I thought O' Ryan was the name of some Irish alderman.

SELWYN (*laughing*). Peter, you should have read up on astronomy. Well, what happened next?

PETER. I was firmly, but politely, informed that I might go and not trouble myself to come back.

SELWYN. Rejected?

PETER. By an overwhelming majority. I was left at the post. (*Crosses and hands coat to SELWYN*) There's your coat and many thanks for use of same.

SELWYN (*examining coat*). Why, it's torn up the back!

PETER. Quite a sad accident I assure you. I'll tell you how that happened. In order to get home and tell the glorious news of my successful failure, I had the misfortune to cut across lots. I never dreamed that there was a pugnacious William Goat "Who was waiting my darling for me." He saw me coming. I ran as fast as my two legs could carry me, but that Billy Goat was some sprinter and his four legs carried him much faster, and just as I reached the fence he raised me one from behind, and I passed over that fence on to the road; wrong side up with care. The coat caught upon a nail in the fence, and behold the result. Of course there was no use in my stopping to argue the matter with that William Goat, I didn't even wait to demand an apology. The coat can yet be repaired, "It's never too late to mend," you know.

SELWYN (*throws coat on sofa and sits*). Oh, it makes no difference. What business has a poor devil of an artist like me with a dress coat?

PETER (*sits R. of table as before*). To wear of course, not as an ornament certainly. You poor Selwyn that's a good joke, ha, ha, ha!

SELWYN. I can't see what you're laughing at. Poverty is no joke.

PETER. Of course you may consider it none of my business, but as a matter of curiosity, I should like to know who is that middle-aged, wealthy and aristocratic looking lady who occasionally comes here in a handsome carriage?

SELWYN. To be candid with you I have a wealthy lady customer who comes here sometimes, but her visits are strictly professional.

PETER. Oh, strictly professional, of course, and not at all sentimental, though an artist's studio is a romantic trysting place for devoted lovers.

SELWYN (*rises*). There's no sentiment at all about it. Mrs. Barrington is——

PETER (*jumping up*). Mrs. Barrington? I wish you joy, my dear fellow, you're on the high road to fortune.

SELWYN. But I assure you she's a person of respectability.

PETER. Of course she is. I didn't say anything to the contrary, did I?

SELWYN. You see, her late husband died——

PETER. Died early one fine morning and left her a wealthy but charming widow. Allow me to congratulate you once more. (*Shakes his hand*)

SELWYN. Her late husband was an extensive dealer in pork.

PETER. Yes, he was mostly and profitably on the hog; in fact he hogged everything in sight.

SELWYN. He accumulated a large fortune.

PETER. For you to spend. The money he made in-lard the fair widow and yourself will now proceed to melt down. Such is life. What one man gathers, another man scatters.

SELWYN. After her husband's death, the widow became a leader of fashion and a connoisseur of art.

PETER. Connoisseur of art? What does she know of art?

SELWYN. Nothing at all, and yet as much as most people who make greater pretensions. But she's a good customer and a man mustn't quarrel with his bread and butter.

PETER. Nor kill the goose that lays the golden egg. But when you marry the charming and wealthy widow common bread and butter will not satisfy you. You'll live on quail on toast, angel cake and the fat of the land. Have you painted her picture yet?

SELWYN. Yes, three of them; in different positions, but she doesn't seem satisfied with those I have taken.

PETER (*laughing*). She never will be satisfied until she has taken the artist as well as the pictures. It's a woman's way.

SELWYN. What do you mean?

PETER. I mean that you are either the greatest blockhead or the biggest hypocrite I ever met. You're too foolish to be at large, when the fool-killer is around, ha, ha, ha! Can't you see the wealthy widow is desperately in love with you?

SELWYN (*rising*). In love with me, nonsense—nothing of the kind. It's all foolishness.

PETER. Yes, of course, love is all foolishness, but such things have happened ever since that innocent flirtation between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Take my advice and don't let such a rich prize slip through your hands. Go in and win her; don't be too bashful. Modesty is the young man's worst companion.

SELWYN. No, no. Besides I love another, who deserves and returns that love.

PETER. Yes; the young and accomplished music teacher, Doris Chester, whose only fault is that she is poor.

SELWYN. What of that? To me she is the best, the noblest, the truest girl in the world. (*Bell rings off stage*)

JONAH BUNDY (*off stage*). Is Mr. Kilby at home?

SELWYN. That's Jonah Bundy's voice.

PETER. I thought it was a steam calliope or a fog-horn. I never did like Jonah. Is he a friend of yours?

SELWYN. Yes, and he is a philanthropist in the widest sense of the word. He never seems to weary of laboring for the benefit of the human race.

PETER. The human race must run on his own legs then. He always looks out for number one first, last, and all the time. He's a sort of law partner of old Grubbins, and they are birds of a feather. A nice pair to draw to. It's my opinion they're playing some deep, dishonest game together. (*JONAH coughs off stage*)

SELWYN. Hush, he is here!

PETER (*sits in arm-chair R. of table, conceals himself with newspaper, turns back to L.*). I wish I was out of here.

ENTER JONAH BUNDY, C. D.

JONAH BUNDY (*crosses and sits on sofa*). Good day, my dear friend Kilby. These hard times should open the hearts of the rich to the sufferings of their fellow men. It touches me, sir, indeed it does. It touches me deeply.

PETER (*aside*). I'd like to see anyone touch him and gain anything by it.

JONAH (*aside, to SELWYN*). Who is your visitor? (*Indicates PETER. Bell rings off stage*)

SELWYN. Excuse me a moment. That may be a customer.

[EXIT C. D.]

PETER. Don't mention it, sir. I'll forgive you if you don't do it again.

JONAH. Don't do what again?

PETER. Whatever it was you were apologizing for.

JONAH (*aside*). A very eccentric individual, but he may be rich. (*Aloud*) Nasty weather we're having, sir.

PETER. No doubt, sir, but don't blame me for it, I didn't make it.

JONAH (*aside*). This fellow must be crazy. I wish I could see his face. (*Aloud*) My dear sir, could I enlist your sympathy and assistance for the widows and the orphans?

PETER. I beg to be excused. You see I have so many orphans in my own family that I cannot possibly assist them. As you know, charity should commence at home.

JONAH (*produces paper*). Then sir, a small donation for the heathen will be thankfully received.

PETER (*throws newspaper down. Rises*). I have no doubt. But you don't get a red cent out of me, Mr. Jonah Bundy.

JONAH (*crosses to R. corner. Aside*). The devil! It's Grubbins' clerk; and I've been wasting my eloquence on a pauper.

ENTER SELWYN C. D. *Carries paper box.*

SELWYN. Here's something mysterious that has been sent to me. I told the messenger that there must have been some mistake, but he insisted that it was all correct and he handed me the receipted bill. (*Places box on table, opens it, takes out a small handsome clock, places it on stand L.*)

PETER. Well done, Mr. Modesty, the first installment of Master Cupid's gifts. Search again till we see what more treasures Dame Fortune may have showered upon you.

SELWYN. Oh, search for yourself. I've got something else to do just now. (*Crosses C. to picture on easel*)

JONAH (*in L. corner*). This sudden windfall is very suspicious. I wonder who could have sent him those presents. He may be a burglar in the disguise of an artist. I have heard of people leading a double life. And it's so hard nowadays to know whom to trust.

PETER. Hello, what else have we got here? As I live! A smoking-jacket and a cap. (*Lady's handkerchief falls out of jacket*)

JONAH (*crosses R. to table*). Genuine stuff, handsome and costly. Let me see.

PETER (*intercepting him*). Excuse me, Mr. Jonah Bundy, you may look but you mustn't touch. Mr. Selwyn has made me his private secretary and I will see all that is to be seen and report thereon to my superior. You will please keep off the grass and attend to your widows and orphans.

JONAH (*crosses to L. corner. Aside*). Impertinent puppy.

SELWYN (*comes DOWN C.*). Who the deuce could have sent them, I wonder?

PETER. I don't know, perhaps it was one of Jonah Bundy's widows or orphans.

JONAH. Don't be sarcastic, Peter Piper. You should respect your superiors.

PETER. So I do, when I meet them. I can guess who sent them. An unknown admirer, evidently a lady, who appreciates your talent and adopts this delicate way of returning some obligation.

SELWYN. Peter, you speak as if you knew who sent them. Won't you tell me who it is?

PETER. I have my suspicions, but I don't know for certain. I guess there's a woman in the case.

SELWYN (*laughs, crosses L. to stand, picks up clock*). A woman indeed. I should like very much to find out who she is.

JONAH (*aside*). And so should I.

ENTER DORIS D. L.

DORIS. How do you do Mr. Kilby? (*Noticing clock*) Oh, what a pretty clock! How much did you pay for it?

SELWYN. Why, the fact of it is that I—I—didn't pay for it.

DORIS. Oh, I understand, you got it on credit. Well, how much did it cost? (*Turns, sees jacket and cap*) And these too, goodness gracious! Santa Claus must have paid you an early visit. Who has been scattering such precious gifts around here, Mr. Kilby?

SELWYN (*hesitatingly*). I am sure, Miss Chester—really—I don't know.

DORIS. Or you don't care to tell, which is it? Oh, excuse a woman's curiosity, of course it's none of my business. Well, I must be going or I'll be too late in giving my lesson. What can I have done with my handkerchief? Oh, here it is. (*Picks up handkerchief, examines it*) No, this is not mine, but it's a lady's and initials worked in the corner W. B. Who is W. B.?

PETER. Winifred Barrington.

SELWYN. If it is hers, she must have dropped it here this morning.

JONAH. No such a thing. I saw it drop out of the smoking-jacket there which was sent to you.

DORIS (*hands handkerchief to SELWYN*). Then Mr. Kilby, you had better return it to the lady (*Crosses to c. d.*) "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." (*At c. d.*) Good day, Mr. Kilby.

SELWYN (*crosses to c. d.*). Doris, hear me, allow me one last word. [EXIT DORIS c. d.]

PETER. Foolish man, don't you know that a woman always has the last word?

SELWYN (*throws handkerchief over picture up c. Aside*). Curse that handkerchief and Jonah Bundy's meddling tongue. [EXIT c. d.]

JONAH. I fear our friend Kilby is in trouble.

PETER. Yes, and you helped to get him into it. But then he's in love and that means trouble the world over. The course of true love never did run smoothly, you know.

JONAH (*sits on sofa*). By the way, Peter Piper is your name, is it not?

PETER (*spouting*). Yes sir, Peter Piper is my name, America is my nation, and Uncle Sam has won his fame by licking all creation. And that's no lie.

JONAH. I have seen your intelligent face in Daniel Grubbins' law office and I've taken an interest in you.

PETER (*aside*). Taffy on a stick. I bet he has an axe to grind. He has taken an interest in me, I wonder if it's simple or compound interest. (*Aloud*) Oh, you flatter me, sir, indeed you do.

JONAH. I take an interest in everthing that concerns the welfare of my fellow creatures.

PETER. Well, I don't. I just mind my own business and let my fellow creatures do the same.

JONAH. A very good idea, my friend. Tell me, is the young lady who just left, a sweetheart of Mr. Kilby's?

PETER. Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies. Oh, well, as it's an open secret, I may tell you that they are betrothed. Didn't you notice how jealous she was about that handkerchief?

JONAH. Yes, I observed her agitation, ha, ha, she fears a rival then?

PETER. Yes, a rival, and a dangerous one she'll find in the person of the wealthy Mrs. Barrington.

JONAH (*aside*). Mrs. Barrington? The very woman I had secretly marked for my own.

PETER. Selwyn Kilby is not only a good artist, but a great

lady killer. It's not his fault that he is handsome, any more than it is mine. Beauty runs in his family as it does in mine. Then who can blame the charming Mrs. Barrington for falling in love with him? Not I, for one.

JONAH (*aside*). I, for one, blame her and I mean to get square with him. (*Aloud*) But, do you really think that a wealthy and sensible woman like Mrs. Barrington would marry such a pauper?

PETER (*rises*). As the poet says "Love, like death, levels all ranks and lays the shepherd's crook beside the sceptre." Still, I don't think that she will ever marry him; for the very good reason that he will never marry her. It takes two to make that kind of a bargain. Besides, he's deeply attached to his first and only love, Doris Chester.

JONAH. Doris—Doris—What did you say her last name is?

PETER. Chester. Doris Chester. It's not a very common name.

JONAH (*aside*). It's a very uncommon one. I well remember making a memorandum of it. (*Opens note book. Aloud*) My friend, what do you know of this young woman's past history?

PETER. My dear and honored sir, I am not at present engaged in writing the past histories of young women, neither am I a census taker, for further particulars I refer you to the young lady herself. (*Takes up newspaper, sits L. of table R., reads*)

JONAH (*reads from note book*) "She was deprived of her parents at an early age, and now supports herself by teaching music."

PETER. Exactly, precisely, just to a dot. (*Sings*) "Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La, Si, Do." She endeavors to teach the young musical idea how to shoot, and sharps and flats are her long suit. You evidently knew her then?

JONAH (*aside*). This idiot is altogether too inquisitive. (*Aloud*) Ahem! Yes, that is, slightly, in the past. Three years ago she lived in Boston with an aged female relative.

PETER. Exactly, precisely, just to a dot. But ever since the death of the aforesaid benevolent old lady she has come to reside in this neighborhood. (*Takes newspaper, reads as before*)

JONAH (*aside*). It's the same girl beyond a doubt; the one I have been searching for over all New York. She to whom old Richard Allison, the eccentric millionaire, left his vast wealth. But as yet she is ignorant of her good fortune. (*Rises and closes note book*) I'll make further inquiries and then—

PETER (*aside*). I'd like to know what that old crocodile has under his hat besides his empty head. I guess I'll have to chase

him; I'm tired of his company anyway. (*Rises*) Say, Mr. Bundy, I'm going to ask a great favor of you.

JONAH. Mr. Piper, I shall be only too happy to grant it. That is—that is—

PETER (*aside*). That is, if it doesn't cost him anything. (*Aloud*) You believe everything the Bible teaches of course?

JONAH. I most certainly do.

PETER. There is one passage which says that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Now there's a poor unfortunate friend of mine who is in trouble and five dollars will save him from jail. Will you give that amount to assist him? It's a mere trifle to you.

JONAH (*crosses to c. d.*). I'll think about it, young man. I have some important business to attend to just now; as I said before, I'll think about it.

PETER. Generous hearted man, don't you forget to think about it.

JONAH (*aside*). Insolent puppy. I wouldn't give him a cent if he was dying. [EXIT c. d.]

PETER (*laughing, crosses to sofa*). The miserly old skinflint! He thinks more of five dollars than he does of his life. It was a capital plan to get rid of him though.

ENTER SELWYN c. d.

SELWYN. Confound the luck! She wouldn't listen to my explanation.

PETER. Another lover's quarrel?

SELWYN. Damn that handkerchief and Jonah Bundy's meddling tongue, telling that he saw it falling out of the smoking-jacket.

PETER. It was a peculiar predicament, an awkward situation that you couldn't lie out of without getting caught.

SELWYN. And I couldn't explain without mentioning names.

PETER. Especially the name of the charming Mrs. Barrington. That was the firebrand that started the conflagration.

SELWYN. It was that confounded clock that first roused her suspicions. It shan't remain another moment. I'll throw it into the street. (*Taking clock, starts c.*)

PETER (*intercepts him*). Stop. Don't you know that time thrown away can never be recalled? Let me be your time keeper. Since you do not appreciate the value of time, it shall adorn my humble apartment, called a sky parlor.

SELWYN. You can have it. (*Gives clock to PETER*) I detest the very sight of it. (*Crosses up c. to picture*)

PETER. Well, I don't. It has an open, honest face, and I can say to it "I once saved you from total destruction. You are now mine and out of gratitude you must keep regular hours, neither too fast nor too slow. Don't go on a strike, nor stop altogether unless your system is run down, or you've got wheels in your head. Keep your hands before your face, as every modest, well-behaved clock should. That's all I shall ask of you." I say, Selwyn, will you show me that last picture of yours? What do you call it?

SELWYN. "A Rose Between Two Thorns." Come this way.
[EXIT D. L.]

PETER (*crosses to D. L.*). Rose was a very foolish girl to get between two thorns; she must have been stuck on them. (*Looking at clock*) I wonder if this is one of those eight day clocks that runs twenty-four hours; well, "Time will tell."

[EXIT D. L.]

ENTER DORIS C. D.

DORIS. No one here? I've come back to apologize to Selwyn for my ridiculous jealousy; I was too hasty. It was ungenerous of me to suspect one who is the soul of honor. And yet I must confess that I am jealous of Winifred Barrington, who, if reports are true, is a scheming, designing widow. I shall see Selwyn and tell him the cause of my strange conduct. I will never again wound his heart by a single doubt. (*BETSY heard singing off R.*) That's Betsy's voice. I can find out from her if Mr. Kilby will soon return.

[EXIT D. R.]

ENTER PETER D. L.

PETER (*places clock on stand, crosses to table*). Well, I must admit that Selwyn's "A Rose Between Two Thorns" is a beautiful picture. I don't believe I could have done better myself; it's just as pretty as a yellow dog under a red wagon going to a county fair. I'm playing in big luck. Kilby has made me a present of the cap and smoking-jacket as well as the clock. I wish she had sent him a diamond ring along with the rest of the goods and chattels. (*Puts on jacket and cap. Laughing*) The wheel of fortune stopped at my lucky number this time. Mrs. Barrington couldn't have selected them better if she had had them made to order. She must have sized up my manly figure when I wasn't looking. (*Feeling in pockets*) I always like to feel in the pockets of other people's clothes; there might

be a stray dollar bill or a dynamite bomb in them. (*Finds letter in pocket, smells note*) Scented, ha, ha! It's from a woman, of course. New mown hay fresh from the farm. "Oh, roses and posies to snuff up your nosies." The note is not addressed to anyone in particular so there can be no harm in my reading it, and being in love myself, love letters have a special charm for me. (*Sits in arm-chair. Opens letter. Reads*) "From Winifred to Selwyn." Ha, ha! It's from the love-sick Mrs. Barrington.

ENTER BETSEY D. R., *listens*.

PETER. The widow is deeply in love and no mistake. She's dead gone. (*Reads*) "Only to call thee mine,—to call thee mine, For thy sweet love I would pine—would pine." She must mean pine wood, I guess she's in the lumber business as well as in the poetry business. (*Reads*) "The violet's blue, the rose is red, I am yours until I'm dead."

BETSY (*aside*). She will be a dead one, if ever I lay my hands on her, for trying to steal my Peter Piper away from me. I'll scratch her eyes out, so I will. [EXIT D. R.]

PETER. Oh, love, sweet love, what foolishness is committed in thy name. (*Yawns*) I'm getting sleepy, that poetry was too much for me. (*Yawns. Places newspaper over face, goes to sleep*)

ENTER MRS. BARRINGTON C. D.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*looking around*). Selwyn not here? I wonder if he received the presents I sent him. (*Seeing clock on stand, up L. C.*) Yes, sure enough, there's the clock. I almost blush for my boldness in coming here so often, but love, sweet love will dare everything. (*Coming C.*) I wonder if he reciprocates my affection. (ENTER BETSY D. R., *remains near door, listens*) Surely, after all the costly presents I have sent him, he cannot be insensible of the depth of my devotion. (*Sees PETER*) Ah, there is my own love now, and sound asleep, doubtless dreaming of me.

BETSY (*aside*). Dreaming of her! Oh, let me get an axe. [EXIT D. R.]

MRS. BARRINGTON (*PETER snores*). Eh, did you speak, Selwyn dear? He is holding in his hand the love letter I sent. Then he must know the true state of my feelings towards him. He also wears the smoking-jacket I sent him, so I'm certain that my

love is returned. (*Calls softly*) Selwyn dear, 'tis I, your own Winifred. (*PETER snores loudly*) Good gracious! He's snoring, how very unromantic! I've heard that if you place a person's left hand in cold water while they are sleeping, they'll reveal their most secret thoughts. I'll make the experiment, and at the same time put his love to a test. [EXIT D. R.]

PETER (*throwing down newspaper*). What's that she says—"Put my love in a chest?" This is getting altogether too hot for me. I only hope my Betsy Bolivar doesn't catch the widow making love to me. I guess I'd better get out of here before she comes back with that water. But I can't go on the street in these togs; I'd be arrested as an escaped lunatic. So here goes to take them off. (*Takes off coat, etc. Noise heard off D. R.*) Oh, Lord! she's coming back with the water. I wish she'd make it beer. I don't believe in the cold water cure. (*Sits as before, pretends to be asleep*)

ENTER MRS. BARRINGTON D. R., *with glass of water. Crosses to PETER.*

MRS. BARRINGTON. Now comes the cold water test. (*Places PETER's hand in glass of water*) Now, Selwyn dear, do you love your own Winifred?

PETER (*jumps up, throws off newspaper*). Hanged if I know. You'd better ask him.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*screams, crosses to sofa*). Oh, you wretch! (*Falls on sofa*)

PETER. She has fainted! Oh, Lord, I'd better get out of here. (*Rushes up, gets clock*) Time flies and so will I.

[EXIT C. D.]

ENTER SELWYN D. L., *sees MRS. BARRINGTON on sofa.*

SELWYN. Mrs. Barrington here, and fainted. What has happened, I wonder?

ENTER D. R. BETSY, *who carries an axe.*

SELWYN (*raises MRS. BARRINGTON*). Look up, Mrs. Barrington, and speak to me.

ENTER PETER C. D.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Selwyn dear, is that you? I feel better now. (*Falls into his arms*)

PETER (*laughing*). Oh, yes! She feels better now.

BETSY R. PETER C. SELWYN and MRS. BARRINGTON L.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—Same as ACT I. *A few days later. Bag of flour, rolling-pin, large tin bowl, and plate of doughnuts and biscuits on table. Darning needle and stocking on chair R. of table. Screen down L. DISCOVERED BETSY at easel.*

BETSY. If there's one thing I like better than something else it's pictures. I wish I could paint pictures instead of washing dishes. I hate housework, especially when one don't get much pay for it. (*Goes c.*) I was cut out for a lady, but someone stole the pattern, and now I'm only a misfit and must earn my daily bread by the sweat of my brow. Speaking of bread reminds me that I must put some bread in sponge. (*Pours flour in bowl*) They do say that when things are at the worst, they always take a turn. If I was a man and had my life to live over again I'd be in politics. A politician is the only man who is smart enough to get a good fat living without working for it. What did I do with my darning-needle? (*Looks on chair R.*) Oh, here it is. (*Picks it up*) Oh, darn the old stocking anyway. (*Throws it in arm-chair R.*) A woman's work is never done.

ENTER MRS. BARRINGTON C. D.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Young woman, can you tell me if Mr. Kilby is in?

BETSY. I can't tell you he is in, because he is out.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Oh, that's too bad. (*Looks at watch*) I had an appointment with him for a sitting about this hour. Do you think he will return soon?

BETSY. Yes, ma'am, I guess he'll be back when he's swallowed a free lunch. (*Crosses to table*)

MRS. BARRINGTON. A free lunch! Does he eat free lunches?

BETSY. Sometimes he's got to; when he's far from home and he ain't got the price of a regular dinner. Beggars can't be choosers, you know. (*Busy with flour on table*)

MRS. BARRINGTON (*aside*). Poor Selwyn, what a miserable life for him. I must find some way to relieve his sufferings. (*Aloud*) I'll remain a short time to see if he'll return. My good girl, what do you do around here? (*Sits L. of table*)

BETSY (*at upper end of table*). Oh, a little of everything. I

work for Mr. Kilby, keep the studio in good order, cook his meals when there's any to cook, and do chores or any old thing.

MRS. BARRINGTON. But if Mr. Kilby is as poor as you say he is, how can he afford to pay you any salary?

BETSY. The answer to that is, he don't pay me just at present, but I'll trust him for he is one of the men a woman can trust. His word is as good as his bond. I ain't afraid of him; he'll pay me when he gets good and ready, and that'll be time enough for me.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*aside*). What a devoted creature! (*Aloud*) What is your name, girl?

BETSY. Betsy Bolivar every day in the week and twice on Sunday.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Well, Betsy, you seem to be a good honest girl, and a faithful servant, and such devotion should be rewarded. (*Takes bills from purse*) You must accept this trifling present of twenty dollars from me.

BETSY. Twenty dollars! Oh, Lor! These rich folks must be very wealthy. Oh, ma'am, I—I—

MRS. BARRINGTON. But I insist, it's only a mere trifle and will enable you to buy a new dress. Now Betsy, your frankness emboldens me to confide in you. But first I must ask you, have you a lover?

BETSY. Well, ma'am, I think I have, but I ain't quite sure. The men are such slippery cusses. They're very much like the Irishman's flea. When you think you have them they ain't there. But to the best of my opinion Peter Piper is my steady company at present.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Peter Piper! What a very peculiar name. Then, Betsy, you can sympathize with me, for you must know what love is.

BETSY. Somebody says it's a ticklish sensation around the heart that you can't scratch.

MRS. BARRINGTON. That is one definiton, but I can give you a better one of the tender passion "Love is the union of two souls with but one single thought, two hearts that beat as one."

BETSY. Oh, that's fine, that's like beating an egg with a double yolk, ain't it?

MRS. BARRINGTON. Well, a little, though it's coming from the sublime to the ridiculous. (JONAH BUNDY *knocks at c. d.* MRS. BARRINGTON *rises, leaves pocketbook on table*) Someone's coming; perhaps it's Mr. Kilby.

BETSY. Or perhaps it may be Peter Piper Esquire. (*Crosses*

UP, *peeps through key-hole c. d.*) Stung again. It's neither; but it's Jonah Bundy, old Grubbins' law partner. A pair of precious rogues, both of them.

MRS. BARRINGTON. As I do not care to meet this person, can you not conceal me till he's gone?

BETSY (*crosses to L. I E.*). Yes, ma'am, you step into this room until he's gone. He ain't a welcome visitor so I guess he won't stop long; that is, if I can help it. His room is better than his company and that's not saying much for either. So you just hide yourself in this room and if you'll only hold your breath for ten minutes you'll be all O. K. That's where master keeps his models, bric-a-brac and other junk.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*crosses to L. I E. Drops handkerchief c.*). Don't forget to tell me when he's gone. [EXIT L. I E.]

BETSY. I guess I'll hide behind the screen till I see what he'll do when he thinks there's no one at home. (*Hides behind screen*) JONAH *knocks at c. d. Pause*)

ENTER JONAH C. D.

JONAH. I beg pardon. Ahem! Nobody in, eh?

BETSY (*aside*). Liar!

JONAH. Eh, what's that? Most remarkable! I thought I heard someone calling my name that time. I presume Kilby can't be long away; I'll wait till he returns. (*Sits in arm-chair on needle. Jumps up quickly*) The devil! What's that? (*Finds needle*) A darning needle! Curse Betsy Bolivar. This is no place for it. (*Crosses, sits L. of table, takes out memorandum book*) Well, I flatter myself, I've done a good day's work; a very good day's work indeed. Let me see, I find that my information is quite correct so far: I can feather my own nest very comfortably, and at the same time outwit old Grubbins! Ha, ha, ha!

BETSY (*imitates him*). Ha, ha, ha!

JONAH. Strange, I thought I heard a voice. It may be only an echo, I've heard of such things being in some houses. (*Reads from paper*) "Doris Chester, who is at present a teacher of music, resided three years ago in Boston with an aged and very wealthy invalid. She is the sole heiress of the late Richard Allison, the eccentric millionaire." Eccentric, bah! the old fool was clean crazy to leave his entire fortune to this girl, simply because she could play the piano like an angel. She entertained him, or rather she hypnotized him, with the national airs "Yankee Doodle," "The Star Spangled Banner," and

"Marching Through Georgia." And to make matters worse, old Grubbins has this will in his possession and will use it to feather his own nest, by plucking the newly-fledged heiress. But I'll be hanged——

BETSY (*half aloud*). You bet, you'll be hanged.

JONAH (*rises*). Confound that echo. It's getting altogether too personal. As I said before, old Grubbins is not going to have the lion's share if I know my business, and I think I do. Ha, ha, ha!

BETSY (*aside, imitating him*). Ha, ha, ha!

JONAH. Damn that echo! It gets on my nerves. If I could only marry the wealthy Mrs. Barrington, I would sever all business relations with old Grubbins. Then I could laugh at them all. I'll propose to her the first chance I get. "Faint heart ne'er won fair lady."

BETSY (*comes c. singing*). "Beautiful Doll, etc."

JONAH. Oh, Betsy, is that you?

BETSY. I guess so, you didn't imagine it was my great grandmother's ghost, did you?

JONAH (*aside*). I wonder if she has been listening. I must try and find out. (*Aloud*) I didn't hear you enter, where did you come from?

BETSY (*spouting*). I came from the cradle and I'm going to the grave. Ha, ha, ha! Ain't you glad you found out?

JONAH (*aside*). Saucy minx! (*Aloud*) I'm surprised to see that you're still here. I heard that you had left.

BETSY. Oh, you heard that, did you? Well let me tell you that your hearing apparatus is out of order; it needs oiling. I never get left. But there are others who sometimes very often do get left.

JONAH. I want a civil answer.

BETSY. If you want a civil answer do not ask an impertinent question.

JONAH. Where is your master?

BETSY. I have no master on earth. I am no man's slave. But if you mean my employer, he is out. I can't tell how much he is out or how soon he'll be in. (*Spouting*) "Where he is, and how he fares, nobody knows and nobody cares." (*Crosses to upper end of table busy making dough, etc.*)

JONAH. Listen to me, Miss Impudence. I came here on business and not to be made a fool of.

BETSY. Oh, Mr. Jonah Bundy, you didn't have to come here to be made a fool of, oh, no indeed. (*Laughs*)

JONAH. Are you guying me?

BETSY. Oh, dear, no, just having a little fun at your expense, that's all. Girls will be girls you know.

JONAH. You tell Mr. Kilby that his rent is overdue now and I'll come back for it this evening.

BETSY (*sings*). "I don't care if you never come back."

JONAH. You can also tell him that I shan't take "No" for an answer.

BETSY. How would "nit" do for an answer?

JONAH (*crosses to c. d.*). Remember, if the rent isn't paid, I'm going to turn you all out of my house.

BETSY. Oh, you are, eh? And let me tell you one thing, Jonah Bundy, the devil never yet closed one door, but the good Lord opened another. Yours ain't the only shanty in the block. So run along and peddle your papers, little boy.

JONAH (*at c. d.*). You talk mighty independently for a pauper.

BETSY (*rushes at him with rolling-pin which she has been using at table*). Pauper! You dare to call me a pauper, eh! You old bow-legged, knock-kneed, hump-backed, baldheaded, walking scarecrow. I've got money to burn. (*Takes out money, shows it to JONAH*) A pauper! Me a pauper! Why, I'm a lady of quality. (*Crosses back to table*)

JONAH (*aside*). I wonder where she got it! (*Aloud*) Oh, Betsy, my dear, I was only joking. You are a dear, good, kind-hearted girl.

BETSY. Oh, taffy on a stick.

JONAH. What's that?

BETSY. I said you made me sick.

JONAH. But where did you get so much money? Where did it all come from?

BETSY. My dear, kind, good Mr. Bundy, you won't give me away if I tell you?

JONAH. Never. Upon the word of a gentleman.

BETSY. Well, it came from the United States treasury.

JONAH. Impertinent hussy. In what school were you taught your manners?

BETSY. In the same school where you were taught your honesty.

JONAH. I'll get even with you for this insult. I'm not through yet!

BETSY (*takes handful of flour*). No? Then you'd better get through that door pretty quick. (*Throws flour at BUNDY*)

JONAH (*wiping off flour*). I'll have the law on you for this.

BETSY. All right. I might as well be killed for stealing a

sheep as a lamb. Let's have a little more law. (*Throws flour on him.* JONAH EXITS C. D. as PETER ENTERS C. D. PETER gets flour intended for JONAH. BETSY crosses to table, laughing) Oh, Peter Piper, you're a white man.

PETER (*brushing off flour*). So I see. I'm the flour of the family, so to speak, though I'm not proud of the honor.

BETSY. Well, Peter, I'm to blame. It was an accident.

PETER. Yes, but I haven't taken out an accident insurance policy.

BETSY. That flour was intended for Jonah Bundy.

PETER. And his loss was my misfortune, Miss Betsy Bolivar. Don't you know that a certain place is supposed to be paved with good intentions, and I guess you've got the contract. However, I'll forgive you this time, so let's kiss and be friends. (*Kisses BETSY, gets flour on her face*)

BETSY (*laughs*). I guess there was enough and some to go around. (*Crosses to R. of table, sits*)

PETER (*sitting L. of table*). Well Betsy, light of my life, what's the news? Is there anything new under the sun, on the top of the earth, or in the waters beneath?

BETSY. Yes, lots.

PETER. Corner lots, house lots, or graveyard lots?

BETSY (*confidentially, across table*). Do you know, I'm so full of news that I'm ready to burst!

PETER. You take my advice and don't do it. It's a bad position to be busted. I've been there and can speak from bitter experience. It's an awful lonesome, empty sort of feeling.

BETSY. Well, Peter, if you're empty, fill up on these doughnuts while I tell you all the news. (*Hands him doughnuts*)

PETER (*eats*). Thanks for small favors; larger ones in porportion. Now Miss Bolivar proceed with your great state secrets. I shall lend you a willing ear.

BETSY. Thanks. I've got ears of my own. Well, in the first place I overheard Jonah Bundy talking to himself a short time ago. He was planning, and plotting to beat the band.

PETER. He could never do it.

BETSY. Never do what?

PETER. Beat the band; he might manage to beat the bass-drum, but not the whole band.

BETSY. Oh, you're talking through your hat. (PETER quickly takes off hat, places it on knee) There's nothing impossible, have you never heard of a one man band. Ha, ha!

PETER (*laughing, coughs with mouthful of doughnuts*). That's very funny, Betsy. But to continue your interesting story—what

was the aforesaid Bundy planning and plotting about? Was it to overthrow the United States government?

BETSY. No. It was all about Miss Doris Chester. He said that she was a rich heiress, but that she didn't know it. And he and old Grubbins were going to feather their nests before she ever got a cent. And old Bundy is coming back here this evening to turn us all inside out. But he shan't turn us out. When the time comes I'll fool him, you bet, and he ain't the first man I've fooled.

PETER. I guess you're right there, Betsy. But, my heart's adored, idol of my soul, I have news to impart to your willing ear. I am going to strike old Grubbins——

BETSY. Oh, don't do that, Peter. He might have you arrested.

PETER. Betsy Bolivar, you jump at conclusions like a kitten jumps at its own tail. I was about to say that I was going to strike old Grubbins for a raise, and if he refuses me there's going to be trouble. Armed with the facts which you have imparted to me I shall have this pair of swindlers in my grasp, and I'll squeeze them good and hard, you bet. The saying is that "Knowledge is power." I now realize the truth of that proverb, and what's more, I'm going to put it into practice e'er the setting of another sun. I cannot support a wife and a possible—or shall I say probable family——

BETSY. Oh fudge, Peter!

PETER. Thanks. I don't want any fudge in mine. We've got to look facts squarely in the face. I can't support a wife on the paltry salary of three and a half dollars per week. Betsy, I can't stand it. I tell you I've got to have more dough.

BETSY (*offering doughnut*). Then have another doughnut.

PETER. I'll beg to be excused for a life time. I haven't the healthy digestion of a billygoat, or I would try and assimilate one more. (*Knock heard at c. d.*)

BETSY. Someone's coming, Peter.

PETER (*jumps up*). Then I'll be going. (*Starts c.*)

BETSY (*crosses to d. r.*). But not that way. Come down to the kitchen. (*Takes pan of dough under arm*) I'm going to put this in the oven to bake.

PETER. Have you anything in the kitchen more digestible than your doughnuts?

BETSY. Yes. I have fifty different kinds of meat. Hash!

[EXIT D. R.]

PETER. "You may live without love, you may live without cash, but where is the man who can live without hash." [EXIT D. R.]

ENTER DORIS C. D.

DORIS. Thank goodness, my tedious music lessons are over for to-day! It's not an easy task to teach people who have no ear for music. (*Looks around*) The place seems deserted. I wonder where Betsy can be. Perhaps she's dusting in the next room; I'll see. [EXIT D. L.]

ENTER MRS. BARRINGTON L. I E.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*looking around*). Thank Heavens that detestable old creature, Jonah Bundy, is gone! But where is the girl Betsy, and why didn't she tell me as she promised she would? In my excitement I forgot my pocket-book. (*Crosses to table, picks it up examines it*) That young girl is honest at least.

ENTER DORIS D. L.

DORIS. Betsy is not in there. (*Sees MRS. BARRINGTON. Aside*) A strange lady.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*sees DORIS. Aside*). A young woman. Who can she be, I wonder. Probably a customer, or a model who poses for Selwyn. I don't like models; they become altogether too familiar with the artists.

DORIS. Madam, may I inquire your business here? I mean, whom do you wish to see?

MRS. BARRINGTON (*aside*). She demands my business with an air of authority. (*Aloud*) Before I answer that question, I should like to learn your right to question me. Are you any relation of Mr. Kilby?

DORIS. No, madam. But I can inform you that Mr. Kilby is out at present.

MRS. BARRINGTON. I am well aware of that also. But I presume I can wait here until he returns.

DORIS. It may be very late before he returns.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*aside*). She evidently wishes to get rid of me. (*Aloud*) I have a special appointment with him, and the servant informed me that he wouldn't be very long away. So if you have no objection I shall wait a while, that is, if I'm not in your way.

DORIS. No, madam, not in the least; but I should very much regret detaining you.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*aside*). Now I am sure she wants to get

rid of me. She may be a rival. (*Aloud*) Oh, you needn't have any anxiety on that head. My time is my own. (*Sits R. at table*) And Mr. Kilby is a man worth waiting for.

DORIS. Indeed?

MRS. BARRINGTON (*aside*). That blow struck home. She is a rival. (*Aloud*) You will pardon a woman's curiosity, but since you say you are no relation of Selwyn—I mean Mr. Kilby—may I ask if you are his model?

DORIS (*indignantly*). Most certainly not, madam.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Oh, you needn't feel offended. Mr. Kilby mentioned to me that he had employed a model to pose for a picture, and you answer the description exactly.

DORIS. Well, you are mistaken, that is all.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Pardon me, but the inference was a natural one on my part; I saw you coming out of his studio, and I find you here alone.

DORIS. Excuse me, madam, I might ask you the same question for I also found you here alone. But since you question me, I will answer you and state that I have a perfect right to come here as Mr. Kilby is my intended husband.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*aside*). Her husband! (*Aloud*) Impossible! I will not believe it. (*Rising.*)

DORIS. Madam, you forget yourself. (*Picks up handkerchief c.*) I am not in the habit of telling falsehoods. Excuse me, I shall retire.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*crosses to L.*). One moment, please. How did you come by that handkerchief? Did Mr. Kilby give it to you?

DORIS. No, madam. I found it here. Does it belong to you?

MRS. BARRINGTON. That need not concern you. (*Snatches handkerchief from DORIS. Goes toward c. d.*) I will bid you good day, Miss Impudence [EXIT c. d.]

DORIS. I wonder what's the matter with the woman? She acts so strangely. This is the woman who visits Selwyn secretly and loads him with costly presents in order to win his affections. She would rob me of his love; but I have resolved to trust him, and believe him faithful until I prove him false. (UP c.)

ENTER BETSY D. R., carrying pack of cards.

BETSY. I guess I'll tell my fortune.

DORIS. Ah, Betsy is that you?

BETSY. Yes, Miss. (*At table R.*) It's me, myself and company. (*Sits R. of table*)

DORIS (*sits L. of table*). Seeing the cards, reminds me; Betsy, suppose you tell my fortune.

BETSY. I ain't much of a fortune teller, Miss Doris, but I'll read the cards for you as best I can, and you're not to blame if your fortune ain't a good one. Blame it all on the run of the cards. To start in with, you run in hearts.

DORIS. But how can I run in hearts when I'm dark?

BETSY. It's not a matter of complexion, but of the color of the eyes and general appearance. Spades represent plain people; diamonds, fairly good looking people; and hearts very nice looking people; therefore you are "The Queen of Hearts."

DORIS (*laughing*). "The Queen of Hearts." Why, Betsy? How ridiculous.

BETSY. Because. Why, love and hearts always go together like Siamese twins. Cut the cards in three parts and make a wish. (DORIS *cuts cards*) My suzzy! You're going to have lots of money and you're going to have lots of trouble.

DORIS (*laughing*). No doubt, for money brings trouble.

BETSY. Yes, Miss Doris, and the want of it brings a darn sight more trouble. The wolf at the door, and old Bundy coming for his rent and going to fire us out. You'll have trouble with a fair woman; but you'll get your wish in the end. There's a dark man and a fair woman going to cause the trouble.

DORIS. Oh, of course, it does not require any power of prophesy to tell that. There's always a woman in the case. (*Laughing*)

BETSY. She's a fair woman and your rival for the dark man.

DORIS (*laughing*). Oh, you're wrong, Betsy. She's not a fair woman or she wouldn't be my rival. I think she's very unfair. (*Knock heard at c. d.*)

BETSY (*jumping up*). Oh, laws, that may be the dark man now. I guess it's old Bundy coming back after his rent.

DORIS (*rises*). I shall go into the next room until he's gone.

BETSY. Oh, Miss Doris, never run away from a man. I'd like to see the man I'd run away from. (*Knock heard again. DORIS crosses to L. I E.*) Oh, come right in and don't wear out your fingers knocking. (*Opens c. d.*)

ENTER DANIEL GRUBBINS C. D., *followed by* ADOLPHUS GUDGEON.

DANIEL GRUBBINS. Good day, all. (*To DORIS*) Miss Chester, I presume? (BETSY *crosses to R. of table*)

DORIS. Yes, sir.

BETSY. And I, sir, am nobody in particular; so please don't notice me.

ADOLPHUS GUDGEON. Oh, how very peculiar, don't you know. Really, by Jove.

GRUBBINS. I am Daniel Grubbins, attorney at law. Allow me to introduce to you a distinguished young friend of mine, from England, the honorable Adolphus Gudgeon.

ADOLPHUS (*bowing to DORIS*). Charmed, I am sure.

DORIS. And Mr. Gudgeon, this is Miss Betsy Bolivar.

ADOLPHUS (*bows to BETSY*). Charmed, I'm sure.

BETSY. Tickled to death to see you, Sir Gudgeon. (*Burlesques his bow*)

ADOLPHUS (*aside*). What a remarkably vivacious little creature, really.

BETSY (*aside, laughing*). He's a regular freak.

GRUBBINS (*aside to ADOLPHUS*). Brace up. (*Aloud*) The Hon. Adolphus Gudgeon hasn't been long in this country, and so he is not yet accustomed to our democratic ways. (*GRUBBINS sits on chair R. of table, ADOLPHUS sits L. of table. DORIS sits in arm-chair. BETSY stands at upper end of table*)

DORIS. I hope you like our country, Mr. Gudgeon.

ADOLPHUS. Oh, charmed really, I'm sure.

BETSY. You're a sort of greenhorn yet, ain't you?

ADOLPHUS. Oh yes, but I don't mind it a bit, don't you know, in fact I'm charmed, really.

BETSY (*aside*). What a snake charmer he'd make. The snakes would all be charmed, really, don't you know.

GRUBBINS. The Honorable Adolphus is a great admirer of our public institutions.

BETSY. Has he been through Bloomingdale Lunatic Asylum yet?

ADOLPHUS. Not that I remember, really.

BETSY. Well, when you get there, look out or you'll stay there.

ADOLPHUS. Eh?

BETSY. Only a short time allowed for visitors. Some of the patients are awful violent. They're just crazy to get out.

ADOLPHUS. Crazy to get out! Really that's funny. Of course they would be crazy to get out, ha, ha, ha! And their keepers would be crazier to let them get out. Ha, ha, ha! Clever really, don't you know.

GRUBBINS. But to come to the object of our visit; my business to-day is with you, Miss Chester.

DORIS. With me?

GRUBBINS. Yes, I want you to call at my office to-morrow forenoon regarding the settlement of a large amount of property which has been left to you by the late Richard Allison, the Boston millionaire.

BETSY. Ah, ha, the cards told the truth after all. (*Claps hands on cards*)

ADOLPHUS (*nervously*). What a boisterous young woman, really.

BETSY. Never mind, Gudgy, that's only our American way. When you get to know us better you won't mind it at all. In fact, you'll be charmed really, don't you know.

DORIS. Surely Mr. Grubbins you are jesting with me about this vast fortune?

GRUBBINS. No, Miss Chester, a lawyer has no time to jest concerning business affairs. Hasn't my partner, Jonah Bundy, mentioned something of this to you?

DORIS. No, he has told me nothing of it.

BETSY. No, but I heard all about it.

OMNES. You!!

GRUBBINS. Young woman, how did Mr. Bundy impart to you important legal information that should have been told to Miss Chester alone?

BETSY (*aside*). Oh, Lor! I guess I've put my foot in it; and now I must lie out of it.

DORIS. Won't you tell us what Jonah Bundy told you, Betsy?

BETSY. Ah, he didn't tell me anything at all, Miss. The cards told me that someone was going to bring you a lot of money.

ADOLPHUS. Oh, she's a fortune teller, really, don't you know. I wonder if she's gypsy. How romantic, don't you know.

GRUBBINS. Mr. Bundy has been shamefully neglecting his business by not communicating these facts to you. However, (*Takes out legal document*) I can supply you with all the necessary information. Here's an abstract of the testator's will. It is strictly legal and correct in every particular. (*Hands her paper*)

DORIS. Mr. Allison, the millionaire, you say is my generous benefactor? But what sentiment could have prompted such liberality?

GRUBBINS. That remains a mystery. My duty is to acquaint you with the facts. And having transacted a part of the business, I'll postpone the rest until I see you at my office to-morrow. (*Rises, takes paper from DORIS*)

DORIS (*rising*). Very well, sir, you may expect me at your office in the forenoon.

GRUBBINS (*crosses to c. d.*). I shall have the necessary papers prepared. Come along, Adolphus.

ADOLPHUS (*crosses up c.*). Oh, yes, of course, don't you know

BETSY. Call again Mr. Gudgy.

ADOLPHUS. I'll be charmed, I'm sure. Good day, Miss Chester. Au revoir, Betsy Bolivar.

BETSY. Oh, you reservoir Gudgy. We part like the blades of a scissors.

ADOLPHUS. How is that?

BETSY. To meet again.

ADOLPHUS. Oh, deucedly clever really, I'm sure. Ha, ha, ha!
[EXIT C. D.]

GRUBBINS. If my partner, Jonah Bundy, should call here shortly, you will please inform him that I have attended to your legal affairs.

DORIS. I shall do so.

GRUBBINS. Good day, Miss Chester.

DORIS. Good day, sir. [EXIT GRUBBINS C. D.]

BETSY. Now, Miss Doris, didn't the cards tell the truth after all?

DORIS. It is a strange coincidence, Betsy.

BETSY. And I can tell you a lot more that the cards didn't tell us. And that is, to be on your guard against these two old swindlers.

DORIS. Why Betsy! Do you doubt their honesty?

BETSY. They have no honesty to doubt. They are a pair of schemers. It's an awful bad habit for people who have a guilty conscience to talk to themselves. I overheard Jonah Bundy doing that very thing while I was the little mouse in the corner listening to every word. You take my advice, that pair will bear watching.

DORIS. Betsy, you have quite a business head on your shoulders, and you possess a great power of prophesy. You can reveal the past, present and the future.

BETSY. Yes, and then some.

DORIS. Before I go, I'm anxious to see Mr. Kilby's picture called "My Best Girl."

BETSY. Do you really wish to see the picture of his best girl? (*Leads DORIS to mirror*) Now take a good look and tell me how you like the picture.

DORIS (*laughing*). Betsy, you little tease! I mean the painted picture.

BETSY. Oh, your rival, as he sometimes calls it. It's in that room. (*Points D. L.*) I hope you won't be jealous of it.

DORIS. Oh, no, now that I'm an heiress. I may purchase it, if it suits my fancy. [EXIT D. L.]

BETSY. I fancy it will suit her fancy because it's a speaking likeness of her sweet self.

ENTER PETER PIPER C. D.

PETER. Here I am again Betsy, and I bring good news this time. (*Places hat on chair L.*)

BETSY. What's the good news Peter?

PETER. I have come direct from an interview with old Grubbins and he has promised if I help him carry out some legal business he will raise my salary to the princely sum of four dollars. I think he must be suffering from brain storm, rain storm or a tornado. And now I'm in a position to ask you to become Mrs. Peter Piper and share my four dollars per week.

BETSY. Peter, I am yours for four dollars. (*Embrace*)

PETER. Sold to Peter Piper one four dollar wife. I couldn't have done better at a rummage sale.

BETSY. And now, Mr. Piper, remember one thing.

PETER. That we two are one, eh?

BETSY. Yes, and I am to be *the one*. And if I catch you flirting with any other woman, beware of my vengeance. I'll scratch her eyes out and tar and feather you.

PETER. Tar and feather me? Then Betsy, I'll feel like a bird. Ha, ha, ha!

BETSY. This ain't no laughing matter.

PETER. No indeed, it seems to be more in the line of the Black Hand Extermination Society.

BETSY (*crosses to D. R.*). Follow me to the kitchen and I'll give you some pure maple sugar.

PETER. If there's one thing I like better than something else, it is pure maple sugar. And it always makes me think of you.

BETSY. How's that?

PETER. You are sweet but unrefined. Lead on to the kitchen my bunch of sweetness. [EXIT *with* BETSY D. R.]

ENTER SELWYN C. D.

SELWYN. No better luck to-day than yesterday. (*Sits at table, picks up cards which BETSY has left on table*) I'd like to be able to read the future. If I could only have the same implicit faith in these cards as Betsy Bolivar has. Truly such childlike ignorance is bliss. If I could only read my destiny in the cards

or in the stars. But "Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate." (*Throwing cards in disgust on table*) The outlook is certainly gloomy enough. My rent is overdue, and I haven't got a red cent to pay it. If I only dared I would like to ask the rich Mrs. Barrington for a temporary loan, but I haven't the courage to tell her of my poverty. No, I must suffer in silence. I've made my bed and I suppose I must lie in it.

ENTER MRS. BARRINGTON C. D.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Oh, Mr. Kilby, I'm delighted to find you at home at last. I do believe that horrid old creature Jonah Bundy has followed me here again. Can I not step into the next room until he's gone?

SELWYN (*rises*). Certainly, Mrs. Barrington. I shall be only too glad to help you escape.

MRS. BARRINGTON. And should he inquire if I entered here, will you, for my sake, say that I did not.

SELWYN. To such a man as Jonah Bundy, a lie is justifiable. But may I ask why should he persecute you? Surely you have never harmed him.

MRS. BARRINGTON. No, it isn't that, but the old simpleton imagines he's in love with me, and he follows me around like a poodle dog. Can't you hide me somewhere?

SELWYN (*crosses to L. I E.*). Certainly, step in here and you'll be safe until he's gone.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*crosses to L. I E.*). Thank you, Mr. Kilby, and if ever you should need a favor, don't be afraid to ask it, and I will grant it. (*Drops glove*) [EXIT L. I E.]

SELWYN (*goes down c., musing*). If I should ever need a favor she would gladly grant it. Well, it is good to know that I have one friend to whom I can turn in my misery. I hate to do so, but desperate diseases require desperate remedies, and beggars can't be choosers. Now I am a pauper, an ugly name to call one's self, but it's the truth—the sad truth. (*Sits at table*)

RE-ENTER MRS. BARRINGTON L. I E. SELWYN *does not notice her.*

MRS. BARRINGTON. Excuse me, I dropped my glove. (ENTER PETER D. R.) Oh, here it is. [EXIT L. I E.]

PETER (*has seen MRS. BARRINGTON EXIT*). I forgot my hat. Ah, me thought I saw a vision of female loveliness disappear through yonder door.

SELWYN (*raises head from table*). Ah, Peter, is that you?

PETER. As far as I am personally acquainted with myself I can state, without fear of contradiction, that I am that identical individual. Ah, you're a sly dog. I saw her as she vanished into yonder room.

SELWYN. Oh, yes, but it is her wish and mine also that her presence here should remain a secret for a short time.

PETER. Certainly, my dear fellow, I never tell tales out of school. I don't blame you, for after all you're only a son of Adam.

SELWYN. Peter, in order to remove your suspicions. I may inform you that the lady in question is highly respectable; in fact she's a customer of mine, whose picture I'm painting and she has come for another sitting.

PETER (*laughing*). Indeed. And where is she going to have her next sitting, upon your knee, eh?

ENTER JONAH BUNDY C. D. *unseen; listens* UP C.

SELWYN. The fact is, she wishes to avoid a meeting with Jonah Bundy who is on his way here now, and she asked me to conceal her until he's gone. As a friend of mine, I want you to do me a favor. Say nothing to a living soul of her presence here, you understand?

PETER. Not a word, on the word of Peter Piper. I don't blame any self-respecting female lady for not wanting to meet that old snake in the grass. Do you know, the only time the Almighty is sorry he ever made man, is when he looks down on such specimens of humanity as Jonah Bundy.

JONAH (*goes DOWN C.*). Excuse me, I hope I don't intrude?

SELWYN (*crosses R.*). No. I presume you have come on business?

JONAH. Yes. Your rent is over-due and I'm here to collect it. I must have it this time. No excuses.

SELWYN. You shall have your rent, if you'll only grant me a few days' grace until I've finished a picture I am now working on.

JONAH. Bah! You fellows always frame up some excuse to avoid paying honest debts, and to cheat people out of their just dues.

SELWYN. Jonah Bundy, you ought to be the last man on earth to speak of other people's honesty. You don't know what the word means. I don't intend to defraud anyone, and if you dare to apply the word cheat to me again, lawyer though you are, I'll throw you out of that door. (*Points C. D.*)

PETER. And I'll second that motion.

JONAH. You shut up. This isn't your "put in."

PETER. Isn't it? I'm thinking it'll be your "put out" if you don't get out.

ENTER BETSY, D. R.

JONAH. I care nothing about your paintings or your pictures. I'm here to collect my rent, and I'm not going away without it.

BETSY (*crosses to BUNDY*). Well, who wants you to? (*Hands him money*) Here's your rent, you old crocodile. Now get out and stay out for another month. We don't want to see your homely mug here any more. (*Crosses to upper end of table*)

ENTER DORIS D. L.

JONAH (*aside*). Now is my golden chance for revenge. (*Aloud*) It's really too bad about you Mr. Kilby with your mock modesty and virtuous airs. You pretend to be so good, so immaculate and noble before your affianced wife. Oh, yes, but "All is not gold that glitters." If she only knew half what I know she wouldn't have so much faith in your boasted honor.

SELWYN. I do not fear your threats. You know nothing dishonorable about me.

JONAH. Indeed! Well, I can prove you a hypocrite—but—
(*Pause*)

DORIS. Go on, sir, what do you know?

JONAH. That at this moment, when he would have you believe him true to you, he has a woman concealed in that room. Let him deny it if he dare. (*BETSY comes DOWN front of chair L. of table*)

DORIS. Selwyn, tell me, does this man speak the truth?

SELWYN (*aside, to PETER*). Can't you help me out?

PETER (*aside*). Sure; leave it to me. (*Crosses c. Aloud*) Yes, Miss Chester, there is a lady concealed in that room, but not by Mr. Kilby. (*Opens door L. I E.*) Step this way, madam, if you please.

ENTER MRS. BARRINGTON, L. I E.

MRS. BARRINGTON. What's the matter?

PETER. Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce my intended wife.

OMNES. His intended wife! (*MRS. BARRINGTON faints, falling into PETER'S arms*)

BETSY (*falling into chair L. of table, kicks her heels against floor*). His wife! Oh, the wretch! The deceitful wretch!!

PETER and MRS. BARRINGTON UP C. BETSY *in chair L. of table.*

DORIS R. *corner.* SELWYN L. *corner.* JONAH L. C.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—GRUBBINS' office. *A week later. Doors C., R., and L. Window R. of C. D. Office desk and chair DOWN L. Cash box containing bills on desk. Table DOWN R. Writing material, ledger, legal documents, bell, books, etc., on table. Chairs R. and L. of table. Screen UP L. corner. Covered picture on easel UP R. Telephone with bell attachment near C. D., directory hanging near phone. Hat rack, umbrella stand, etc. DISCOVERED PETER PIPER looking through telephone directory.*

PETER. The man who invented the telephone was smarter than the individual who invented lies. The telephone as a long distance talker is certainly a great convenience; in fact, a blessing to humanity. Besides, you can tell a man what you think of him without having to say it to his face. Now they do say "Every dog has his day" and this is going to be my day. I'm going to get square with old Jonah Bundy for getting me into trouble at Kilby's studio the other day. I certainly got in bad. I saved Kilby, but I lost my best girl. Betsy Bolivar won't have anything more to do with me, and to add to my misfortunes, I have made an enemy of the charming Mrs. Barrington. It's an awful mix-up and I have gained the reputation of being a first class liar. Well, I must grin and bear it. Jonah Bundy is the cause of it all. So here goes to get even with him. (*Taking down receiver*) "Hello Central; 444 Party J. Hello! Is this Plume, the undertaker? This is Grubbins' Law Office. Send one ready made coffin at once and a man to take charge of the body of old Jonah Bundy. Yes, he's dead. Yes, heart disease, very sudden. Attend to it at once please." (*Hangs up receiver*) I guess that'll fix him all right. (*Dances around office*) I'm so happy I could throw myself away. (*Keeps on dancing*)

ENTER JONAH C. D. *Sees PETER dancing.*

JONAH. Piper, what are you doing? Do you take this office for a dancing school?

PETER. No, sir, I had a cramp in the calf of my hind leg and I was trying to stretch it. I've been sitting or rather roosting on that high stool so long that I got cramps.

JONAH. I don't believe a word of what you say. You're a chronic liar.

PETER. Well, sir, a man is judged by the company he keeps. It's in the air around here.

JONAH. No more of your idiotic jests. I want to be alone, you get out.

PETER. Can I get a half holiday to-day?

JONAH. What for?

PETER. I want to get a hair-cut and my face manicured.

JONAH. Get out, go to the devil. (*Sits at table*)

PETER (*starts toward c. d.*). All right, sir, I'll tell him that I saw you. (*Hides behind screen*)

JONAH. For the life of me, I can't imagine why Grubbins keeps that good-for-nothing idiot in his employ. He is the most useless, brainless fool I ever saw; besides he's the most bare-faced liar since the days of Ananias. The idea of his claiming to be the husband of the Mrs. Barrington. The impudence of that lying rascal beats the world's record. The widow is a woman of common sense and sound judgment. She afterward disclaimed all knowledge of the affair, so it was evidently a put-up-job between that artist and Peter Piper. Mrs. Barrington is a lady of refined tastes; she has an eye for the beautiful and she loves me. (*PETER laughs. Telephone rings. JONAH turns*) Eh? Oh, it's that damned telephone. I thought I heard someone laughing. (*Goes to telephone*) Curse telephones—they're a nuisance. (*At 'phone*) Hello! Yes, yes, this is lawyer Grubbins' office. What is it? Eh, what? Whose coffin? Who the devil are you? Plume, the undertaker? Well what do you want? Pine or Rosewood for Jonah Bundy. Now see here I am Jonah Bundy and this is not "All Fools' Day." You think you're funny, don't you? I never ordered my own coffin. Don't I know whether I'm dead or not? Eh, you're another. Oh, so, I'm an old stiff am I? I'll have the law on you and that may cure you of your practical joking habits." (*Hangs up receiver*) Now, if I only had a witness I'd bring an action against that fellow and recover damages for wanting to bury me before I am dead. I'll call upon that undertaker at once and let him know that I'm very much alive. He

called me an old stiff did he? It's a clear case of defamation of character. I'll show him. [EXIT C. D.]

PETER (*comes from behind screen, laughing. Lights cigarette*). First round for Peter Piper. Old Bundy will get the surprise of his life if he ever finds out it was I put up the job on him. Ha, ha, ha! (*Sings*) "But what care I, if death be nigh." (GRUBBINS *heard coughing outside C. D.*) Hello, here comes Grubbins. (*Sits at desk; pretends to be busy. Tries to put out cigarette*)

ENTER GRUBBINS C. D., *sniffs*.

GRUBBINS. Don't I smell smoke?

PETER. Perhaps you do, sir. There has been a big fire in the next block and the smoke was wafted in through the window by the gentle breeze from heaven.

GRUBBINS. Gentle rot! It is tobacco smoke that I smell. Was the fire in a cigar factory?

PETER. Not knowing, sir, can't say. But I'll go out and see. (*Starts to C. D.*)

GRUBBINS. Stay where you are and attend to your business. That is only a lame excuse to shirk work. Young man, if you want to succeed in life, you must keep your nose to the grinding stone. (*Sits R. of table*)

PETER. Excuse me, sir, my nose ain't a jack-knife that needs sharpening. I've heard of people who cut off their nose to spite their face, but I'm not going to disfigure my beautiful Roman nose for any such purpose. Furthermore, allow me to remark that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

GRUBBINS. I don't care to hear what it makes Jack. I only know that it can't make you any duller than you are now. There's no danger of you working yourself to death.

PETER. Well, sir, I don't care to do all the labor myself and keep other worthy men out of a job. I like to leave enough to go around. I always think of my fellow creatures, sir.

GRUBBINS. Never mind your fellow creatures, but mind your own business. You talk too much.

GRUBBINS. Has Jonah Bundy been here?

PETER. Yes, sir. He has been here but he took his departure to parts unknown some time ago.

GRUBBINS. Stop your idle jesting. This is not a minstrel show and you the end man. Do you know where he went to?

PETER. To the best of my knowledge and belief he went to the undertaker's.

GRUBBINS. To the undertaker's? What for?

PETER. To make arrangements for his funeral.

GRUBBINS. Piper, you're a fool.

PETER. Thanks, I'm in good company. When I tell you the truth, you call me a fool. When I don't tell you the truth you call me a liar. I'd like to know what I really am so that I can catalogue myself.

GRUBBINS. Well, you can set yourself down as a fool, a knave and a liar. That reminds me of another matter. A short time ago I raised your salary to four dollars a week, not because I considered your services worth it, but because you led me to believe that you were about to be married. You never got married. Piper, you have deceived me—

PETER. No, sir. The girl went back on me, through no fault of mine. Let me tell you the story of my sad misfortunes.

GRUBBINS. You are the most unmitigated liar that ever lived, and I wouldn't believe you under oath.

PETER. My noble lord, I am not now under oath, therefore you can believe me. You see it was this way; there were two of us, another fellow and myself. The other fellow's girl got jealous about another woman who was concealed in a room. I came to his rescue by telling a falsehood and claiming the lady as my intended wife in order to save the other fellow, but at the same time I ruined myself in the eyes of my best girl. Alas she'll have nothing more to do with me. I am now left like the last rose of summer to bloom all alone.

GRUBBINS. That is the reward of lying. Since you are not going to get married I shall now reduce your salary to three dollars.

PETER. But it was formerly three fifty per week.

GRUBBINS. I know it, but I'll tax you the other fifty cents for having lied to me.

PETER. If you're going to put a tax on liars, suppose you commence with yourself. You're a modern Ananias.

GRUBBINS. Another remark like that and I'll discharge you.

PETER. I'll discharge myself first; immediately and at once.

GRUBBINS. Sit down and attend to your duties.

PETER. No, sir. I'm through; I fear if I stay here much longer you'll make me as big a scoundrel as you are yourself. Never again will I take my pen in hand to scribble for you. I shall not resume work until you restore my salary to three fifty per week. I cannot live upon air and water as I am neither a fish nor a balloon. Now, sir, you have my ultimatum.

GRUBBINS (*aside*). This fool is useful to me and if I discharge

him he may reveal my business secrets. (*Aloud*) Piper, I have reconsidered the matter and I'll restore your salary to three fifty per week.

PETER. You will?

GRUBBINS (*sits R.*). Yes.

PETER (*jumps up on stool at desk*). Then Richard is himself again. Once more I take my pen in hand, for the pen is mightier than the sword.

GRUBBINS. Now stop your tragedy business and let us get to facts. Have you investigated the financial condition of this young spendthrift, Gudgeon?

PETER. Yes, sir. My investigation was full, ample and complete in every particular. The said Hon. Adolphus Gudgeon dare not show his nose at the club; he is penniless, utterly ruined. And all the money he owes you, you can whistle for.

GRUBBINS. No matter, Piper. You work hand in hand with me and we'll form a plan that will realize a snug little sum of money. Now this Englishman has good looks, which can be used to our advantage.

PETER. What are you going to do with him? Place him in a beauty show?

GRUBBINS. No, I have a better plan. You have heard of this young heiress, Doris Chester, who has recently succeeded to a vast fortune under the will of the late Mr. Allison?

PETER. Yes, sir, I have heard of the young lady's good luck and only wish it was mine.

GRUBBINS. Miss Chester has done me the honor to make my house her home for the present. As her friend and lawyer I extend my protection to her.

PETER. And with her board and lodging you make her pay pretty well for your friendship and protection?

GRUBBINS. That's my business.

PETER. I know it, and a profitable business you make it too. I bet you place a high tariff on your friendship and protection.

GRUBBINS. To come to the point—what I want to know is, is there some sort of an attachment between this young lady and that young poverty-stricken artist, Selwyn Kilby?

PETER. Yes, sir, there is an attachment as deep as a well. But the course of true love didn't run any smoother for them than it did for me. I have heard that it's all over between them now.

GRUBBINS. Too bad; how did it happen?

PETER (*comes off stool*). The story is a long and a sad one. One fine summer's day a beautiful widow entered their little garden of Eden. This widow was the serpent, and as there were no snake charmers around, she got in her deadly work and

estranged two loving hearts. And now they never speak as they pass by. That was the fatal day that I claimed the widow as my intended wife. And now we meet as strangers, in fact, I got the icy deal all round. Hence these tears. (*Pretends to cry*)

GRUBBINS. Served you right. That ought to be a lesson to you, to tell the truth in future.

PETER. How can I tell the truth and study law at the same time? No man can serve two masters. Some folks can lie themselves out of trouble, but I only succeed in lying myself into trouble through no fault of mine. I am a martyr in the defense of others. (*Knock heard at c. d.*)

GRUBBINS. See who's at the door. (*PETER looks through key-hole c. d. Looks out at window. Knock repeated*) What the devil are you doing? Why don't you open the door?

PETER. You didn't tell me to open it; you just told me to see who was at the door.

GRUBBINS. I now tell you to open it.

PETER. You can open it yourself; it's Miss Doris Chester. She didn't call to see me and I don't care to see her. I'll retire to my wigwam. If you want me, send for me. [EXIT D. R.]

GRUBBINS. Confound that fellow's impudence. (*Crosses to c. d. Knock heard again. Opens c. d.*) Come in, Miss Chester.

ENTER DORIS c. d.

DORIS. Do I intrude?

GRUBBINS. Not at all, Miss Chester. On the contrary, your presence is like a ray of sunshine in my gloomy office.

DORIS. It is rather dark here, is it not?

GRUBBINS. Yes, ahem, what we lawyers call legal obscurity. Miss Chester, people would never believe in law if they could see through it. Please be seated and I'll bring a lamp from the next room. [EXIT D. L.]

DORIS (*crosses to R.*). I sometimes wonder if Mr. Grubbins is an honest man. It's so hard to know whom to trust.

ENTER PETER D. R.

PETER. The coast is clear. I guess I'll vamoose.

DORIS (*turns, sees PETER*). Ah, Mr. Piper. I'm glad to see you.

PETER (*aside at c. d.*). And I'm sorry she saw me. (*Aloud*) I'm glad to know that you are glad. I thought you'd never forgive me after that little escapade in Kilby's studio some time ago.

DORIS (*sits L., laughing*). Why should I bear you any malice

for that unpleasant incident? And that reminds me—how is your wife?

PETER. Which wife? I mean——

DORIS. Which wife? Why, how many wives have you? Are you bigamist?

PETER. To confess the whole truth and nothing but the truth, the lady who was playing hide and seek was not my wife, nor my intended wife.

DORIS. Indeed! Why then did you introduce her as such?

PETER. On the theory that "All's fair in love and war." I tried to save my friend Kilby by telling a white lie. Like a boomerang it recoiled upon my own head. I acted for the best and it turned out for the worst.

DORIS. You sacrificed your honor and veracity to save a guilty friend.

PETER. You wrong Mr. Kilby, Miss Chester. I told that lie to shield an innocent man. At least give me credit for being an honest liar.

DORIS (*sighs*). Oh, well, it's all over between Mr. Kilby and me, so we'll let the matter drop.

PETER. That's best for the present. Explanations will be in order later on.

DORIS. Quite true. (*Goes up c.*) What picture is that covered up?

PETER (*removes cover*). It may interest you, Miss Chester, as you are an admirer of art. It may remind you of bygone happy days.

DORIS (*examines picture*). How did that picture come here?

ENTER GRUBBINS D. L., *carrying lighted lamp and documents; places lamp on table.*

GRUBBINS. Here, Piper, have this typewritten at once. (*Hands document to PETER.*)

PETER. Yes, sir, with the greatest felicity and alacrity. (*Crosses to D. R. Aside*) I wonder if he'll raise my salary to four dollars for this job. [EXIT D. R.]

DORIS. Mr. Grubbins, may I inquire how you came by this picture, is it yours? I mean did you purchase it while it was on exhibiton or did you get it direct from the artist?

GRUBBINS. It does not exactly belong to me. I hold a sort of mortgage on it. It was placed in my possession by the artist as security for some money which I advanced him. But I shall claim the right to sell it after a stipulated time. That time has now expired and I can sell it for one hundred dollars.

DORIS. One hundred dollars for a work which cost the artist many an anxious day and night. Is it thus genius is rewarded?

GRUBBINS. Miss Chester, this is a practical age, the world neither cares for, nor does it pay for unrecognized genius. It pays for a reputation and a name.

DORIS. A name! An empty sound made for the worshippers of mammon. But time avenges the wrong; names perish, but genius lives forever. Find out if the artist wishes to sell it, and I will pay five hundred dollars for the picture.

GRUBBINS. Excuse me, Miss Chester, but such a large sum for a piece of spoiled canvas seems to me like woeful extravagance.

DORIS. No matter what it seems to you, I wish to possess it.

GRUBBINS. Oh, very well, young lady. You can afford to gratify your expensive whims. But I should think that one hundred and fifty dollars is a liberal price for it.

DORIS. Excuse me, Mr. Grubbins, you may be a good lawyer but you are no judge of art. (*Looking at picture*) A very sad subject—"Ariadne Weeping By the Seashore." What a world of eloquent melancholy is in that figure.

GRUBBINS. Yes, poor girl, she looks as if she were sea-sick.

DORIS. Sea-sick! Have you never read the story? (*Coming C.*)

GRUBBINS. No Miss, I never read stories nor tell them either.

DORIS. Mr. Grubbins, if you have the address of the artist send him five hundred dollars for this picture. My only request is, that my name shall remain unknown. You understand?

GRUBBINS. Perfectly, and your wishes shall be obeyed to the letter, Miss Chester. (*Crosses to D. L.*) I'll send him a cheque for the amount directly. (*Aside*) My young client seems to have a will of her own. Can she suspect who the artist is?

[EXIT D. L.]

DORIS (*at picture*). Dear picture, I'm glad it's mine. Perhaps sometimes I shall recall the days I watched it grow beneath his pencil, from the first dreamy outline, into life and beauty, while I sang to him. Oh, sorrow's crown of sorrows is the remembrance of happier days. But he was false to his vows. He is nothing to me now; nothing but a memory of what might have been.

ENTER ADOLPHUS C. D.

ADOLPHUS. Oh, I beg pardon. I hope I don't intrude.

DORIS. I'm right glad to see you. (*Sits L. of table.*)

ADOLPHUS (*sits R. of table*). Charmed, I'm sure. But Miss Chester you needn't be surprised if you don't find me as cheerful as usual to-day.

DORIS. I'm sorry to learn this. Has anything serious happened?

ADOLPHUS. Miss Chester, you see before you an unfortunate young man, pursued by a relentless fate, in the shape of an obstinate tailor whose clothes I have advertised and made fashionable by wearing. Those unprincipled scoundrels allow you to get into their debt and then dun the life out of you.

DORIS. That's too bad. If I were you I wouldn't patronize such mercenary tradesmen any more.

ADOLPHUS. A capital idea, really. I'll act on your suggestion in the future and so get square with those rascals, even if I've got to go without any clothes. I wonder where old Grubbins is?

DORIS. He has just stepped into the next room, no doubt he'll return presently.

ADOLPHUS. Might as well plunge deeper in his debt, if he will stand for it. "In for a penny in for a pound," one might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, don't you know.

ENTER GRUBBINS D. C.

GRUBBINS. Miss Chester, I have sent the cheque to the artist as you instructed me.

DORIS (*rises*). Thanks, that is all for the present. (*Crosses to c. d.*) Send the picture to me as soon as possible. I shall defray all expenses. Good-day, sir. Good-afternoon, Mr. Gudgeon. (*Laughing*) Don't let your tailor scare you. [EXIT c. d.]

ADOLPHUS (*goes up c.*). She's laughing at my misfortune, really, don't you know.

GRUBBINS. Mr. Gudgeon, I wish to have a serious talk with you, so sit down.

ADOLPHUS (*sitting r.*). I hate a serious talk with a lawyer, it always means trouble, don't you know. But proceed.

GRUBBINS (*sits l.*). Upon examining my books I find that you owe me nearly five thousand dollars. Now I can't afford to make further loans without more tangible security. You understand?

ADOLPHUS. I think I do; proceed, I'm becoming interested.

GRUBBINS. However, I have a plan by which you can liquidate that debt besides coming into possession of a handsome fortune for yourself.

ADOLPHUS. Oh, won't that be jolly, don't you know. Well, unfold your plan.

GRUBBINS. There is only one difficulty in this arrangement, and that is good security. What security can you offer besides your name, which, in this country isn't worth a dollar. What could I do with your name?

ADOLPHUS. I'm sure I don't know, really, unless you might get

it framed and hang it up in your office as a warning to other confiding money lenders. (*Laughs*)

GRUBBINS (*rises*). This levity is out of place, sir. Are you aware that you are a ruined man, Mr. Gudgeon?

ADOLPHUS (*rising, laughing*). Ruined! With such a title and figure as I've got, and so many wealthy marriageable young ladies in America? My title, and my Apollo-like figure are my stock in trade. As long as I possess either, I have no fear of being ruined. I may be temporarily embarrassed, but ruined—never; really, don't you know. (*Goes up to picture*) So don't worry, my legal advisor; I don't, why should you?

GRUBBINS (*aside*). This fellow isn't such a fool as he looks. He has blue blood in his veins, is fairly good-looking and has a title, the lode-stone that draws our American heiresses into the web. He would be the very man to marry Doris Chester, and if I can bring that match about, it will mean a good fat boodle for myself. I'll try it. (*Aloud*) As I said before Mr. Gudgeon, I have a plan.

ADOLPHUS. Yes, you said that before. Proceed with your plan. Are you going to take me to the Klondike? I couldn't stand the cold, I really couldn't, don't you know. It would freeze my blue blood, don't you know.

GRUBBINS. No sir, nothing so desperate as that. My plan is to have you marry a wealthy American girl.

ADOLPHUS. Well, that's an improvement on the Klondike scheme. Still, I don't care to enter wedlock at present.

GRUBBINS. It is marriage or a prison, so take your choice.

ADOLPHUS. Wedlock or padlock. I know what I'll do, I'll toss up a coin. Heads, I take wife; tails, a prison takes me. (*Tosses up coin*) Heads it is. The wife wins. Well, I don't mind being sold, but I shan't be knocked down too cheap. If I must be sacrificed, I want to be sold to the highest bidder.

GRUBBINS. The lady I have chosen for you is immensely rich.

ADOLPHUS. And I presume remarkably homely and very ancient.

GRUBBINS. On the contrary, she's young and beautiful and innocent as a cooing dove.

ADOLPHUS. Oh, what a rare combination—youth, wealth, beauty, and innocence. Dame Fortune at last I thank thee. But when, and where, am I to behold this paragon of perfection?

GRUBBINS. The lady in question is a client of mine, return here in a half an hour; and I'll arrange that you meet her in this office.

ADOLPHUS (*crosses to c. d.*) I'll be charmed I'm sure. In half an hour I shall fly back here on the wings of love and money.

[EXIT C. D.]

GRUBBINS. Good. I have landed a prospective husband for Doris Chester. And I'll make a good fat boodle out of the alliance, and Jonah Bundy shan't get a red cent of it. I'll be a rich man yet. (*Sits at table and writes. Taps bell on table*)

ENTER PETER D. R.

PETER. Did you agitate the annunciator to summon my presence?

GRUBBINS. Stop your foolery and attend to business. I want you to deliver this note to Miss Doris Chester. And remember 'tis for her and nobody else. Hurry back and don't stop on the way to make stump speeches or spout Shakespeare.

PETER. My bark is on the shore; I mean my bike is at the door. Nothing shall stop me excepting a hold-up man. (*Runs to c. d. collides with JONAH BUNDY who ENTERS c. d.*) [EXIT c. d.]

JONAH. Curse that fellow's impudence. Grubbins, why don't you discharge that good-for-nothing scoundrel?

GRUBBINS. What would be the use, I'd only be jumping from the frying pan into the fire. I don't know where to find a boy that would work so cheaply as he does.

JONAH. Grubbins, I've come here to demand an explanation about certain matters. We are supposed to be partners, are we not?

GRUBBINS. Why yes, of course we are, friend Bundy.

JONAH. Don't call me friend when you know in your false heart you don't mean it. By a mean, contemptible, unprofessional trick, you have snatched this wealthy heiress out of my hands. She was mine. I discovered her and fairly offered to go shares with you in the rich prize. But under false pretences you have abducted her by lying, deceit and trickery.

GRUBBINS. Bundy, be careful. Such abusive language is actionable and libellous.

JONAH. Bah! I do not fear your threats. I repeat that you have induced her to become your client in order that she can be completely in your power. (*Passionately*) A pretty partner you are, eh?

GRUBBINS. Calm yourself, friend Bundy. As you are subject to heart disease, it's necessary that you should keep cool. I will confess, I did save Miss Chester from being robbed by you.

JONAH. In order that you might have a better opportunity to rob her yourself, eh? I know you, and everybody knows you as one of the biggest rogues in the profession.

GRUBBINS. Be careful. "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones." Your virtuous indignation amuses me, (*Laughs*) Jonah Bundy.

JONAH. And that's not all. Your attentions to the wealthy Mrs. Barrington are distasteful to me.

GRUBBINS. I don't care, as long as they're not distasteful to her. The charming Mrs. Barrington is also a client of mine and my attentions are purely of a professional nature.

JONAH. You are dead stuck on her, or rather, on her money.

GRUBBINS. So are you, but you can't get either. I'm sorry to be your rival, but go ahead and may the best man win. Go in and win her, Jonah. Remember, "Faint heart ne'er won fair lady."
(Laughs, sits R. of table)

JONAH. Miserable hypocrite! Do you laugh at your victim? You insult the man you have robbed and cheated. If you don't agree this very moment to give me an equal share of the plunder I'll crush you under the record of your own iniquities. (Raises ledger from the table toward GRUBBINS' head)

GRUBBINS. (rising, angrily). Jonah Bundy put down that book. I am not afraid of your threats. Now listen to reason. We are both in the same boat.

JONAH (places book on table). Well, I don't want to quarrel. Give me five hundred dollars and I'll call it square.

GRUBBINS. You can call it square or any shape you please, I shan't give you five hundred cents.

JONAH. You won't, eh? Then I shall play my trump card.

ENTER PETER C. D. *unseen, hides behind screen.*

GRUBBINS. Well, and what is your trump card?

JONAH. I can explode the mine that you fancy a golden one. Perhaps you are not aware that the late Mr. Allison, whose wealth Miss Doris Chester now inherits, was married and had one child?

GRUBBINS. I once heard him say so. But wife and child are long since dead.

JONAH. Don't be too sure, my friend. What if I can prove that after Allison's rescue and his failure to locate his wife and child he went to Boston to live, where he met Miss Chester, and that Mrs. Allison, believing her husband lost, came with her boy to New York, where she changed her name to Kilby.

GRUBBINS (jumps up). To Kilby?

JONAH. Yes, her maiden name. You see, I can prove that you don't know it all.

GRUBBINS. Well, proceed.

JONAH. The child, the rightful heir to the Allison estate, still lives and is known as Selwyn Kilby.

GRUBBINS. The artist?

JONAH. The same. I am glad that I aroused your attention.

GRUBBINS. 'Tis certainly a very romantic story, but it needs stronger proof than your word to substantiate it.

JONAH. To convince the skeptic I have brought them with me. (*Produces papers*) The dying confession of Mrs. Kilby and a copy of the baptismal certificate of her son, Selwyn Kilby. These precious documents were confided to me by Selwyn's mother a few hours before her death.

GRUBBINS. For what purpose?

JONAH. To place them along with these letters in Miss Chester's hand.

GRUBBINS. Forgeries, all forgeries. And supposing they are genuine, they are not worth the paper they're written on. Richard Allison left his property to Doris Chester without even mentioning his wife or son whom he believed dead.

JONAH. Yes, but his believing them dead didn't make them so.

GRUBBINS. Their legal right is clearly with us.

JONAH. And the moral and legal right is clearly with us.

GRUBBINS. What we have we shall keep, and there's an end of the matter. (*Rises, crosses to R. corner*)

JONAH. Not quite, Daniel. When Miss Doris Chester discovers that she wrongfully holds the property which belongs to her old lover, Selwyn Kilby, her pride will revolt at the idea of her being a usurper. She is too good, too noble to assist you in your nefarious schemes. Now Daniel, do I make myself clearly understood?

GRUBBINS (*aside*). It is important that she should not learn this secret until she is married, or she may foolishly throw her entire fortune away.

JONAH (*starts to go c. d.*). I shall now seek Miss Chester and discharge the sacred trust imposed upon me.

GRUBBINS. My dear Mr. Bundy, don't be too hasty. I fear I may have said some things to offend you.

JONAH. You were rather too personal in your remarks, Daniel, indeed you were. You wounded my tender feelings. I can't bear it. It cuts me to the heart, indeed it does. (*Weeps*)

GRUBBINS. You've said some very unkind things too. But let us forget and forgive; there's my hand, Jonah. (*Offers hand*)

JONAH (*shaking hands*). There's mine, Daniel. And now between ourselves, do I get that five hundred dollars you promised me?

GRUBBINS. Oh, certainly. On the very day that Miss Chester marries the Hon. Adolphus Gudgeon you shall have five hundred dollars.

JONAH. But will she marry him? I have an idea that she still loves young Kilby. Besides, this brainless dude, Gudgeon hasn't a cent in the world.

GRUBBINS. No, not at present. But don't you see when he marries Doris Chester he'll be rich and then, Jonah, we shall squeeze him. We'll make a good thing out of this match. We can easily work him because he's as soft as dough.

PETER (*aside, from behind screen*). They're going to work him for his dough, eh?

JONAH. A capital idea, Daniel, you're a wonderful genius.

PETER (*aside*). He's a wonderful liar.

GRUBBINS. And now friend Bundy, can I have a look at those papers? I'll take good care of them.

JONAH. Not just now, Daniel. I can take good care of them myself until you give me the five hundred dollars.

GRUBBINS. Oh, very well, but remember the success of our plans depends upon strict secrecy. Not a word of this to Doris Chester.

JONAH. You can trust me. And above all, don't you let that good-for-nothing Peter Piper get an inkling of our scheme. If he does he will expose the whole affair and ruin us. He's as talkative as a parrot and as mischievous as a monkey.

PETER (*aside*). So I'm a parrot and a monkey, am I? He's an old baboon.

GRUBBINS. I think I'll discharge him. When he knows too much about my business, it's time to fire him.

PETER (*crosses to c. d., aside*). When I'm fired, there'll be a hot old time around here for someone. [EXIT C. D.]

JONAH (*goes toward c. d.*). Well, Daniel, remember our verbal agreement. I receive five hundred dollars on the wedding day. Until then—mum is the word. (*Starts to EXIT c. d.*)

ENTER PETER C. D. *collides with* JONAH.

PETER. Excuse me again. Please keep off the grass.

JONAH. If you were in my office, I'd teach you manners, young man.

PETER. How can you teach me what you never had yourself, old man?

JONAH. Oh, go to the devil.

PETER (*at c. d., shouting after JONAH*). Yes, and I'll tell him that I saw you. (*To GRUBBINS*) Miss Chester is on her way here now; in fact, she is coming up the street.

GRUBBINS (*crosses to d. l.*). When she comes, show her into my private office. I'll be waiting there. EXIT D. L.

PETER. So I'm going to be fired! Before that eventful day arrives I'll have some fun with old Grubbins and Jonah Bundy. (*Knock heard at c. d., opens door*) Come right in, Miss Chester.

ENTER DORIS c. d.

DORIS. Is Mr. Grubbins in?

PETER. Yes, miss, that shining legal light is waiting for you in his sanctum sanctorum. (*Indicates D. L.*) In other words, Daniel is in the liar's den—I mean lion's den.

DORIS. What!

PETER. I mean the lawyer's den. Miss Chester, I have told you so many lies that if I told you the truth now I suppose you wouldn't believe me. It's so hard to live down a bad reputation, you know. But I have reformed, and this time I'm going to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

DORIS. I am glad to hear it. Speak out, I will listen.

PETER. Yes, I must speak or I'll bust. This antediluvian sinner and shyster lawyer, Daniel Grubbins, is concocting a diabolical scheme between himself and old Jonah Bundy to rob you of your property and destroy your happiness.

DORIS. How, pray?

PETER. They want you to marry that English dude, Adolphus Gudgeon. I overheard the whole plot and I'm warning you in good faith, for I don't want to see you swindled, Miss Chester.

DORIS. I thank you very much for your timely and friendly warning. I shall be prepared to meet any underhand tricks on their part. As for marrying that simpleton, Gudgeon, I'd as soon marry the man in the moon.

PETER. The man in the moon is not a bad sort of a fellow, only he gets full once a month. (*DORIS laughs*) As a special favor I would ask you not mention my name in this matter.

DORIS. You can rely upon my silence, and I thank you for putting me on my guard. (*GRUBBINS coughs off L.*)

PETER. Here he comes. (*Loudly*) This way, Miss Chester.

ENTER GRUBBINS D. L.

GRUBBINS. Ah, Miss Chester. I'm glad you are punctual. Please step into my private office. I have important business matters to discuss with you. (*EXIT DORIS D. L. To PETER*) When the Hon. Adolphus Gudgeon arrives tell him to wait here.

PETER. And if he don't come, what shall I tell him?

GRUBBINS. You're a fool,

[*EXIT D. L.*]

PETER (*at D. L.*). Before I'm through with you, Mr. Daniel Grubbins, you may find out that I'm not such a fool as I look. (*Crosses to window looks out*) Hello, the Hon. Adolphus Gudgeon is coming down the street, (*Looking in opposite direction*) And Mrs. Barrington is coming up the street. (*Going c.*) Now the fun begins. And it won't be my fault if I don't turn this musty, old law office into a first-class matrimonial bureau. (*Knock heard at C. D.* PETER *opens C. D.*) Fairest of earth's creatures, enter.

ENTER MRS. BARRINGTON C. D.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Oh, Mr. Piper is that you? Is Mr. Grubbins engaged?

PETER. Not exactly, but he's trying hard to be.

MRS. BARRINGTON. What do you mean?

PETER. He is at this very moment in his private office enjoying a tete-à-tete with a beautiful young lady—object matrimony or other money. If he's not engaged by the time he's through, it won't be his fault.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Peter, are you quite sure you're not lying?

PETER. Quite sure, because I know that I'm standing up and telling the truth. If you doubt me, take a peep through yonder key-hole and be convinced.

MRS. BARRINGTON. It's rather a mean thing to do, but they say all is fair in love and war. I must know the truth and be sure that I'm right. (*Looks through key-hole at D. L.*) Peter, you have spoken the truth.

PETER. Thank heaven, someone believes me at last!

MRS. BARRINGTON. Yes, Grubbins is false and he swore he loved none but but me.

PETER. A lawyer's oath doesn't count for much; they are used to swearing.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*goes c.*). Oh, for means of revenge upon the false hound. Peter, what shall I do?

PETER. If Grubbins is untrue I'll tell you what to do. Revenge is sweet and Grubbins is sour. Don't give him a chance to shake you, shake him first. Remember there's as good fish in the sea as ever grew upon land. You have another admirer who has long worshipped you, adored you in secret, and whose name is—

MRS. BARRINGTON. Don't mention it, I already can guess—Jonah Bundy.

PETER. No, this man is no Jonah, but a gallant young nobleman of rank; in fact he's the rankest specimen of a nobleman I ever saw. His name is the Hon. Adolphus Gudgeon, Baronet,

Dukelet, a Knight of The Bath Tub, and Grand Exalted Ruler of The Royal Dog Kennel. He is also a Jim Dandy, too sweet to live and too strong to work.

MRS. BARRINGTON. But do you think he would have me, Peter?

PETER. Would he have you? He's hungry for your love (*Aside*) And he's thirsty for her money.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Really, I'm so inexperienced in love affairs. What would you advise me to do, Peter?

PETER. I'd advise you to do old Grubbins and take young Gudgeon.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Peter, I believe you are right and I shall do as you say. (*Knock heard at c. d.*)

PETER. That's Gudgeon now. I can tell his peculiar style of knocking. He's not a common knocker; he has a gentle, aristocratic way of knocking. Now if you'll step in the next room, I'll call you when I've got everything fixed.

MRS. BARRINGTON (*crosses d. r.*) My poor heart palpitates like a little birdie. [EXIT D. R.]

PETER. A little birdie indeed! She looks more like a Thanksgiving turkey. (*Knock heard again. Opens door*) Come right in and make yourself at home.

ENTER ADOLPHUS C. D.

ADOLPHUS. How do you do, Peter?

PETER. Oh, I'm able to walk around and take light food. Do you wish to see Mr. Grubbins?

ADOLPHUS. Yes, I had an important engagement with him, don't you know.

PETER. Well, he's been called away suddenly but he has delegated to me full power of attorney to act in your affair.

ADOLPHUS. Charmed, I'm sure. Then you know—

PETER. I know all. I couldn't hold down this job if I didn't. The lady he wishes you to marry is now waiting in the next room. (*Indicates d. r.*) She has given her consent to the proposed union and is willing to be led to the altar to become the wife of The Hon. Adolphus Gudgeon, Baronet, Dukelet and Bracelet.

ADOLPHUS. Charmed, I'm sure.

PETER. Now follow my advice if you want to win her. Pop the question at once. She is a very wealthy lady but she's strictly business, like all American women, so don't waste precious time by making love to her. No Romeo and Juliet speeches. I'll go now and trot her out. [EXIT D. R.]

ADOLPHUS. Trot her out? (*Sits r.*) He speaks of the lady as if she were a young colt at horse fair. Well, my finances are in

such desperate straits, that a wealthy marriage is the only way out of it. Grubbins said the lady was young, beautiful and innocent; that's so much in my favor.

ENTER GRUBBINS D. L. *stands at door, sees ADOLPHUS.*

GRUBBINS (*aside*). Ah, there's my man. I'll bring the young lady out and clinch the deal at once. [EXIT D. L.]

ENTER JONAH BUNDY C. D.

JONAH. I have a strong suspicion that Grubbins intends fooling me. I followed Mrs. Barrington to the corner and I'm convinced she entered this office. (*Looks around, sees ADOLPHUS. Aside*) That idiot here. I don't want to meet him. (*Crosses to D. L., peeps into room*) Just as I suspected—the old rascal is in consultation with Miss Chester. I'll just step aside and watch their little game. (*Hides behind screen*)

ENTER PETER and MRS. BARRINGTON D. R.

PETER. Mrs. Barrington, allow me to introduce to you the Honorable Adolphus Gudgeon, nobleman, stableman and a right royal good fellow. (*Aside to ADOLPHUS*) On your knees at once and pop the question. (*Goes UP C.*)

ADOLPHUS (*kneeling*). My dear lady, notwithstanding the seeming abruptness of my proposal. (ENTER GRUBBINS D. L., *followed by DORIS. Both stand amazed at D. L.*) I have the honor to ask you for your hand in marriage. Your lawyer, Mr. Grubbins, wishes it and I wish it, so fairest creature, say that you'll be mine.

MRS. BARRINGTON. Mr. Gudgeon, I am yours forever.

ADOLPHUS (*rises; they embrace*). Charmed, I'm sure.

GRUBBINS (*rushes DOWN, throws ADOLPHUS toward R.*) Idiot, you've proposed to the wrong woman!

ADOLPHUS. Don't blame me. It was Peter Piper's fault.

GRUBBINS. Oh, damn Peter Piper, where is he?

PETER (*runs UP to hide behind screen, collides with JONAH*). Ah, ha! Another rat! (*Ladies scream and jump on chairs. PETER struggles with JONAH and screen falls. PETER is pounding JONAH who screams "Let me go," etc.*)

MRS. BARRINGTON *falls in chair L. ADOLPHUS crosses to fan her.*

DORIS *falls in chair at desk, laughing. GRUBBINS in chair R., disgusted.*

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*Same as Act III. Next day. DISCOVERED DANIEL GRUBBINS seated R. of table.*

GRUBBINS. Mrs. Barrington is going to marry that English dude, Gudgeon. This marriage upsets all my plans. Well, there's one consolation I won't have to pay Jonah Bundy that five hundred dollars. (*Rising*) And to think that all this trouble has been caused by this idiot Peter Piper. I must discharge him before he does any more mischief in this office. Who knows, but his next move might be to set fire to the house.

ENTER SELWYN KILBY C. D.

SELWYN. Mr. Grubbins, I trust that you will pardon this unceremonious intrusion, but I wish to ascertain the name of the generous patron who gave five hundred dollars for my picture. Or was there some mistake in the cheque?

GRUBBINS. Not at all, Mr. Kilby. The cheque was quite correct, but I'm not at liberty to mention the name of the purchaser who so highly appreciates your artistic genius. Suffice it to say that she is a person of refinement and culture.

SELWYN. She? It was a lady who bought the picture?

GRUBBINS. Oh, yes, quite an old lady, a very wealthy and eccentric client of mine.

SELWYN. I would like to see her and thank her in person.

GRUBBINS (*aside*). I dare say he would. (*Aloud*) Mr. Kilby it is impossible to grant your request, I am pledged to secrecy in the matter. The old lady desires her name should remain unknown for the present, and I must respect her wishes.

SELWYN. Very well, sir. Now to change the subject, I wish to settle the bill I owe you. It has hung like a millstone around my neck for the last three months. (*Hands bill to GRUBBINS*)

GRUBBINS (*crosses to cash box on desk*). Certainly sir. Prompt payment makes long friends. (*Counting change, hands bills to SELWYN*) Here's your change, Mr. Kilby.

SELWYN. Thanks. Good day, sir. (*Goes toward C. D., counting money*)

GRUBBINS (*locking cash box on desk*). Good day.

ENTER PETER PIPER D. R. *does not see* SELWYN, *who is hidden by door opening.*

PETER (*to GRUBBINS*). Well, I delivered the picture right side up to the beautiful and accomplished Miss Doris Chester, and never told a living soul a word about it.

SELWYN (*coming c. behind PETER*). It was Miss Chester who purchased my picture?

PETER. The very identical self-same party.

GRUBBINS (*crosses R., aside*). I'll kill that fellow yet. (*Aloud*) Peter Piper, you lie, and you know it.

PETER. No, but you lie and I know it. Lying has got me into so much trouble in the past that I'm through with prevarication. So I again repeat that in carrying out your instructions, I also carried out a picture from this office and delivered it to Miss Doris Chester in propria persona. If there be any person who doubts my veracity, let him speak now or forever hold his peace, and them's my sentiments.

SELWYN (*shakes PETER's hand*). Peter Piper, I believe you.

PETER. Hurrah my character for veracity is being rapidly re-established.

SELWYN. Mr. Grubbins, I cannot understand, your purpose in concealing Miss Chester's identity, but you evidently had a motive. There is some mystery here which I must try and fathom. (*Crosses to C. D.*) Remember sir, you shall hear from me again. [EXIT C. D.]

PETER (*laughing*). Ah, ha! The end is not yet, Daniel Grubbins. It is to be continued in our next issue. Then, Daniel, prepare to meet thy master below.

GRUBBINS. Peter Piper, your end has come right now. After such treachery you may consider yourself discharged. I've no further use for your services.

PETER. Thanks, my lord. I also consider myself lucky in losing this job, for if I stayed here much longer I fear I might become as big a scoundrel as you are.

GRUBBINS (*handing him money*). Here's your salary, up to date.

PETER. Thanks. Three dollars and fifty cents is an up-to-date salary.

GRUBBINS. And now young man, let me give you a piece of good advice.

PETER. Don't do it. I've more good advice on hand than would start a Sunday school.

GRUBBINS. Knowing your weakness for talking about affairs

which do not concern you, I warn you if you reveal any of the secrets of this office I'll have you lodged in jail.

PETER. Thanks for the interest you take in my future welfare. But if I should reveal any of the secrets of this office you'd be the one that would be safely lodged in jail, so there would be a pair of us, as the devil said to his elbows.

GRUBBINS. What do you know?

PETER. If I told you that, you'd be as wise as myself, but you'll find out. Good-bye, Grubbins, and remember—the end is not yet. (*Crosses to c. d.* ENTER JONAH C. D.) And satan came also. Here's your right bower. You're a lovely pair. When shall we three meet again? [EXIT c. d., *laughing*.

JONAH. Why the devil don't you discharge that insolent puppy?

GRUBBINS. I have discharged him.

JONAH. And none too soon; the fellow is becoming dangerous; he knows too much. Well, to come to the business that brought me here. What about that five hundred?

GRUBBINS. There's nothing about it. The marriage, as we arranged it, is all off. It was a contingent fee dependent upon the union of Doris Chester and Adolphus Gudgeon, which as you know will not take place.

JONAH. Well, that was no fault of mine.

GRUBBINS. Nor mine, Jonah.

JONAH. Yes, it was all your fault. You kept that Peter Piper in your employ against my advice, when you should have bounced him long ago. But now you lock the stable when the steed is stolen. I want my money and I'm going to have it, do you hear? Remember, I still hold the papers regarding the Allison estate and proving Selwyn Kilby's legal right to the property now held by Miss Doris Chester. If you don't comply with my demands I shall sell those papers to the highest bidder.

GRUBBINS. Have you those documents with you?

JONAH. I have, why do you ask? (*Puts hand in pocket, takes out document which has pistol concealed inside*)

GRUBBINS. Because I'm going to have them or have your life. (*Draws knife quickly*)

JONAH (*presents pistol*). And you'll get neither. Daniel, I came prepared for you this time. I suspected your little game.

GRUBBINS (*forced laugh*). Why, Jonah, it was only a little joke.

JONAH. Oh, yes, you're a great little joker, Daniel.

GRUBBINS. I wouldn't harm a hair of your head.

JONAH (*takes off hat, exposes bald head*). No, I don't suppose

you could if you would. But what are you going to do about the money?

GRUBBINS. I haven't that amount in the office at present. Return in a half an hour and I'll have a cheque cashed by that time.

JONAH. All right, Daniel, and I'll bring along my trusty friend. (*Shows pistol*) In case you might try some more of your little jokes. [EXIT c. d.]

GRUBBINS. I was too hasty. I should have used milder measures; one can catch more flies with molasses than with vinegar. Chloroform is the safest of all weapons, and the bed of the river is deep enough to hold him and his secret forever. (*Sits L. of table*) Yes, I'll do it. (ENTER BETSY c. d.) Yes, I'll do it.

BETSY (*goes to end of table, unperceived; slaps on table*). Who are you going to do now, old marrowbones?

GRUBBINS. None of your business, Miss Impudence.

BETSY. Is that so? Well, I'll tell you what is my business. I want to know where Peter Piper is at.

GRUBBINS. I don't know, and I don't want to know.

BETSY. Is that so? Because I'd like to see him.

GRUBBINS. I'd like to see him in jail for all the trouble he has caused me.

BETSY. Is that so? Well, old crocodile, I've seen honester looking faces than yours behind prison bars.

GRUBBINS. Get out of here, and find your Peter Piper. He's not employed here any more.

BETSY. Is that so? Well, he ain't lost much. The job was no good nohow. He couldn't feed a sick canary on the salary you were paying him, let alone support a wife, see! When I find him, we're going to make up again and get spliced, see.

GRUBBINS. Well, I don't care whether you get spliced or hitched, see.

BETSY. Say, old rags and bones, you ought to get off the earth and give an honest man a chance. You're only living out of spite to keep some good man out of a job, see.

[EXIT c. d., *quickly*.]

GRUBBINS. What a saucy little cyclone in petticoats! Truly a fit companion for Peter Piper. (*Crosses R. c.*)

ENTER DORIS CHESTER c. d.

DORIS. Mr. Grubbins.

GRUBBINS. Ah, Miss Chester, delighted to see you. Your presence brightens—

DORIS. Enough sir! I haven't come here to receive empty compliments. The object of my visit can be told in a few words. I wish to take my business affairs entirely out of your hands.

GRUBBINS. Why, my dear Miss Chester, what has happened to cause this sudden resolution? Has Peter Piper been poisoning your mind by slandering me?

DORIS. Certain facts have come to my knowledge, it is not necessary to tell how, that convince me you are not an honest man but a dangerous enemy, and therefore are not to be trusted with the management of my property.

GRUBBINS (*aside*). Jonah Bundy has betrayed me. (*Aloud*) Hear me, Miss Chester.

DORIS. I'll hear nothing more. I know all. You are no longer my lawyer nor adviser; you have betrayed your trust. I am done with you, sir.

GRUBBINS. Very well, young lady, be it so since you wish it. I'll be candid with you. The property you now hold never did really belong to you; in the first place, you are a pauper, a nobody. The late Mr. Allison left a child, a boy. That boy still lives and is of course the rightful heir. He is a poor struggling artist whose mother had changed her name from Allison to Kilby, her maiden name. That son and lawful heir is now one Selwyn Kilby, an artist.

DORIS. Selwyn Kilby, the artist! And you have kept me in ignorance of all this? You are even a greater criminal than I suspected. You have allowed me to usurp another's place, to rob him of his birthright and his property, while he was struggling in poverty. And I was innocent of any intention of evil; you were the guilty one; you mean, contemptible swindler whom I loathe and despise. You're a disgrace to your profession—

GRUBBINS. Take care girl, or I'll bring an action against you for defamation of character.

DORIS. You have no character; how can I defame it? I shall see Mr. Kilby at once and make all the reparation in my power. Then I'll leave him to settle with you. (*Starts toward c d.*)

ENTER SELWYN C. D.

DORIS. Mr. Kilby, this meeting is most opportune and fortunate; I was going in search of you. I find I have unconsciously done you a cruel wrong, and I wish to explain and make all the reparation in my power. I have been that man's dupe, he wrought all the mischief.

SELWYN. I can well believe it; but this man's villainy has at last come to an end. His boon companion and partner in crime, Jonah Bundy confessed all before he died.

GRUBBINS. Dead! Is Bundy dead?

SELWYN. Yes. He shot himself at his lodgings a short time ago, as he was about to be arrested. My lawyer is now on his way here with Bundy's dying deposition implicating you in all his misdeeds. He has a warrant for your arrest.

GRUBBINS. Your lawyer?

SELWYN. Of course. I had to engage a competent lawyer to investigate the matter, and also to manage my estate. A man in whose honesty and legal ability I have the utmost confidence. (ENTER PETER and BETSY C. D. SELWYN presents PETER) Allow me to introduce him to you—

PETER. Peter Piper, attorney at law, at your service.

SELWYN. Mr. Grubbins, as this office happens to be part of my estate, I wish you to vacate to-day as your lease expires.

PETER. Yes, and please take in your shingle as soon as possible as I want to hang out mine in large letters so that he who runs may read. Mr. Grubbins, after what has happened you may consider yourself discharged, and furthermore, I warn you that if you ever dare to reveal the secrets of this office, I'll have you lodged in jail. Then you can sing "Be it ever so humble there's no place like home."

BETSY. Yes, old Grubby, your partner was a Jonah by name as well as by nature. He gave you dead away; then he gave himself dead away to the undertaker. Go thou and do likewise, see.

GRUBBINS. Very well, Mr. Kilby, under the circumstances I shall vacate. I'll have all my personal effects removed as soon as possible. In the meantime, Peter Piper, I warn you that if you misappropriate or steal any of my property I'll see that you're punished for it.

BETSY (*crosses up to GRUBBINS*). Now see here, if you dare to say that Peter would steal any of your old goods or chattels I'll scratch your eyes out, see.

PETER. He couldn't see if you scratch his eyes out, Betsy.

ENTER ADOLPHUS and MRS. BARRINGTON C. D.

ADOLPHUS (*to GRUBBINS*). Allow me to introduce to you the Lady Adolphus Gudgeon.

GRUBBINS. The lady Adolphus Gudgeon and you may go to the devil,
[EXIT C. D.]

ADOLPHUS. What's the matter with Grubbins? He seems put out.

PETER. He is more than put out, he was kicked out. The law firm of Grubbins & Co. is now a thing of the past and the firm of Peter Piper & Co. is a thing of the future.

SELWYN. But Peter, who's going to be the company?

PETER. Betsy Bolivar shall be my *law* partner and *life* partner. She shall share my profits and losses, joys and sorrows, as she has proved faithful through all of "Peter Piper's troubles."

CURTAIN.

POSITIONS.

PETER *and* BETSY C. SELWYN *and* DORIS R. C. MRS. BARRINGTON *and* ADOLPHUS L. C.

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